

Exclusive Interview

DAN DEACON

Brings his eccentric electronic to Korea

The birth of a family

LIAM'S ADOPTION STORY

Plus 3 CRAZY KIM JONG-IL CONSPIRACY THEORIES in KOREA BEAT

GROOVE

KOREA

10 NEW YEAR

resolutions
you won't keep

13 YEARS

of the Seoul
Hiking Club

20 TIPS

for expat
artists

NOODLE MADNESS!

- Cold days, hot noodles
- "Ramen" done right
- 5 custom ramyeons
- Noodles of Asia

Add a dash
of soul to
your pasta



ROLLER DERBY ROK

FIERCE, FEMININE AND FIERY: MEET THE WOMEN OF ROKD



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HAPPY NEW YEAR

This is the hottest January issue of Groove Korea yet! We have roller derby babes in Community, piping-hot noodles in Food & Drink, interviews with funky musicians in Music, and a heart-warming photo essay on adoption in Analysis. Welcome to Groove Korea. Take your coat off and stay a while.

EDITOR'S NOTE

It's already shaping up to be a tough year. Mass English teacher layoffs; uncertainty surrounding North Korea after its frail dictator finally died; the global economy looks likely to sink back into recession; the won is slipping (again); Seoul is colder and whiter than Toronto – it's enough to drive one to drink Cass, or gasp, even Hite.

But fear not fellow expats – optimism abounds. Where 2010 wound down with the jarring bombardment of Yeonpyeong Island by Pyongyang's artillery, 2012 begins with an air of cautious optimism that newly anointed North Korean ruler Kim Jong-un will steer his impoverished nation toward less-hostile relations with his neighbors. In the classroom, fewer native-speaking English teachers on the payroll of the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education will only drive up demand at private institutes, likely increasing employment opportunities at hagwon. And even if the global economy once again contracts, rest well knowing that Korea's is one of the most resilient economies among the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Don't panic – the won and Kospi will bounce back. They always do.

If you're in need of some financial advice, pay heed to Michelle Farnsworth's column Banking Questions: Michelle Answers. In January, Michelle sorts out the different checks available in Korea and reminds us how we can save a substantial amount of money at our favorite restaurants and theaters by using the right check card.

This is the hottest January issue of Groove Korea yet.

Combining fierceness, femininity and a punk rock aesthetic, Jenny Na's piece on roller derby in Korea embraces hard-hitting action and plenty of saucy attitude. Also in the Community section, Tyron Butler gives us his tongue-in-cheek take on some of the top (unsuccessful) new year resolutions. It's hilarious.

What's winter in without some pippng-hot ramyeon? In Food & Drink, Josh Foreman gives us five ways to turn your basic ramyeon into something spectacular; the best "ramen" joint in Myeong-dong; and Cold Days, Hot Noodles.

Find your groove in the music section. Read our interviews with Dan Deacon, who visits Busan and Seoul this month, the Korean band On the Spot, the one-man expat act Seth Martin, and the broken beats of Short Fiction.

Lastly, and on a more serious note, warm your heart with Romin Lee Johnson's photo essay on adoption. He photographed adoptive parents Ashley and Kurt's first moments with their son Liam – the culmination of their year-long journey. A family is formed.

As always, get in touch if you have a story to share.

Thanks for reading,



Matthew Lamers
Editor-in-chief

mattlamers@groovekorea.com



DEALS

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Groove Korea's exclusive partnership with JigoCity, a social commerce company, will bring you insane deals – up to 70 percent off – at your favorite restaurants, pubs and lots of other places. All you need is a PayPal account. Stay on the lookout for the launch at www.groovekorea.com.

January

White Box Theatre's first year

The community has embraced the space and the shows that have been performed there. Both audience sizes and critical responses have exceeded the Australian couple's expectations. "We expected a rough first year," director Desiree Munro said. "Having sold out shows was something we could only dream of."

Read the story online in January and in print in February.

Wilshire Boulevard of broken dreams

Koreatown in DTLA (Downtown Los Angeles) is famously known as the poster child of Korean diaspora in the United States. If you have seen the ins and outs of this small and densely populated district in the city of Los Angeles, you would see Koreatown, a sector that is not in the limelight of an outsider's imagination.

K-town, as I see it, is a quarter of broken dreams and inglorious hard labor merely compensated by BMWs and Mercedes Benzes.

Read the story online in January and in print in February.

Nothing to declare but one's Genius

"Genius means douchebag, scumbag. But we wanna be genius., explained Kim Il-du, guitarist and lead singer of the three-strong, Busan-based, Indie-rock band Genius.

Three years ago, American expat and drummer, Lee Chung-mok watched a band called in The Basement near the PNU area of Busan. "They were the coolest band I'd ever seen. Never did I imagine that they would let me play drums with them. But they did." Lee still plays with guitar, vocalist and the enigmatic veteran solo performer. They've lasted through band name changes and member changes and have finally settled as Genius, with American bass guitarist and vocalist, Steve C for the last year and a half. *Read the story online in January and in print in February.*

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"I HEARD IT'S REALLY GOOD, BUT IT'S TOO EXPENSIVE"

"MY FRIEND SAID IT WAS THE BEST HE HAS TRIED IN SEOUL"

"I FEEL LIKE EATING IT BUT LET'S JUST GO FOR SOME RAMYEON"

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SEOUL LOWERS AX ON ENGLISH TEACHERS

Seoul City Council announced that the capital would scrap a program which placed native English speaking teachers in classrooms throughout the capital.

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THE PLIGHT OF THE MOON BEAR



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Berlin' has become an unmistakable Itaewon landmark

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THE NOODLES OF ASIA



DIY PASTA TO RIVAL A RESTAURANT • Page 40

In Urbs & Spices, Read Urban gives us his mom's Pasta alla Carbonara

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"We want to convey a positive message and confident energy."

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Some established foreign artists in Korea share some of what they've learned over the years on surviving and thriving in Seoul

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KOREAN DVD REVIEWS: BLIND, THE FRONT LINE

Want to rent a Korean movie but don't know where to start? Daniel Vorderstrasse sorts the duds from the gems — so you don't have to.

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20 (MOSTLY)-EXPAT ART EXHIBITIONS

The most comprehensive guide on what the country's expat artists are up to. Any of these exhibits would make a perfect weekend diversion.

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ROCK'EM SOCK'EM ROLLER DERBY

Roller derby combines fierceness, femininity and punk rock aesthetic — and it's arrived in the ROK

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ELEGANCE IN ELEPHANT KINGDOM: LAOS

International: Flash Parker puts Laos back on backpacker itinerary

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SEOUL'S OFFBEAT MUSEUMS

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GETTING TO KNOW KOREA'S MOUNTAINS

The Seoul Hiking Club celebrates its 13th year in operation this month. Get out and see some of the country's most beautiful mountains.

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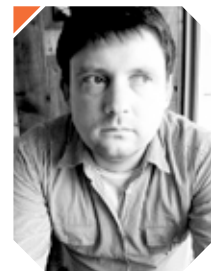
MEET SOME OF THE PEOPLE WORKING DAY AND NIGHT TO BRING YOUR COMMUNITY TO KOREA.



David Volodzko

David Volodzko has been teaching philosophy and literature in Japanese and Korean universities for the past nine years. He is currently a graduate student at SUNY-Stony Brook, and living in western Jerusalem, where he spends his free time studying Hebrew and Arabic.

Conor O'Reilly



Conner is a long(ish)-term resident of Korea and has been a regular contributor for Groove Korea since May 2010. He enjoys searching for decent, cheap wine, adding to his collection of unread books and trying to understand why he never learned to play guitar. He is happily married and lives in Suwon.



Dan Himes

Dan is a web nerd and Busan resident who has always lived near water. He grew up in Pennsylvania, but no he isn't Amish. He loves long walks on Haeundae Beach, geeking out in front of his computer and sporting Hawaiian shirts each and every Friday. He enjoys these activities even more with a bottle of makgeolli.

Mike Hurt



Michael Hurt came to Korea in 1994 and taught on the Fulbright ETA program for two years in Cheju-do. After studying and doing dissertation work in UC Berkeley's Department of Comparative Ethnic Studies, he returned to Korea in 2002 as a documentary and street photographer. He plans to finish his Ph.D in August 2012.



Matthew Lamers

Matt lives with his family in beautiful Paju. When not taking care of his children, and sometimes while doing so, he holds the reins as Groove Korea's editor-in-chief. He loves good sushi, cheap wine and fresh air.

GK

GROOVE STAFF

Publisher: Sean Choi & MJ Kim
sean@groovekorea.com

Editor-In-Chief: Matthew Lamers
mattlamers@groovekorea.com

Music Editors: Summer Walker
summer@groovekorea.com

Kathy Kearns
kathy@groovekorea.com

Travel & Food Editor: Josh Foreman
josh@groovekorea.com

Community Editor: Rob McGovern
rob@groovekorea.com

Art Director: Daniel Sanchez
daniel@groovekorea.com

Senior Adviser: Chae-Moon Lim
chae@groovekorea.com

Sales & Marketing: Hana Lee
hana@groovekorea.com

Chief Consultant: Michelle Farnsworth
farnsworth@shinhan.com

Intern: Charles Joonwoo Park
intern@groovekorea.com

Webmaster: Dan Himes

CONTRIBUTORS

WRITERS

Nathan Schwartzman, Mike Hurt, Romin Lee Johnson, John Brownlie, Read Urban, Daniel Vorderstrasse, Paloma Julian, Stephanie Potell, Elaine Knight, Elizabeth Groeschel, Dean Crawford, Christina Murphy, Connor O'Reilly, Nigil Gillis, Tyron Butler, Jenny Na, Flash Parker

PHOTOGRAPHY

Mike Hurt, Romin Lee Johnson.

COVER

Mike Hurt

To contact Groove Korea for advertising, submissions or general comments, please email:
INFO@GROOVEKOREA.COM

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Groove Korea Magazine 2012

HIGH LIGHTS

These are your stories. Groove strives to bring the community around you to the palm of your hands.

WE RECOMMEND

THE REMARKABLE and RECOMMENDED
Look for the Bookmark Sign.



• Page 20

Liam: A story of adoption

I was standing at the back of a small meeting room at Holt Adoption Services with a precocious 13-month-old Korean toddler and his foster family, my camera at the ready.



• Page 46

Dan Deacon in Korea

You may not know Dan Deacon, but you should. He has paved his own way as a musician without the help of the traditional music industry and has been gradually cultivating an experimental music revolution.



• Page 28

Noodle madness

January is noodle madness! Groove has: 5 custom ramyeons; the best 'ramen' restaurant in Myeong-dong; the noodles of Asia; and Hot days, cold noodles.



• Page 74

Elegance in the Elephant Kingdom

Surrounded on all sides by bigger, bolder neighbors Thailand, China, Vietnam and Cambodia, Laos is all too often left off South East Asian travel itineraries.

• Page 66

Roller derby ROK

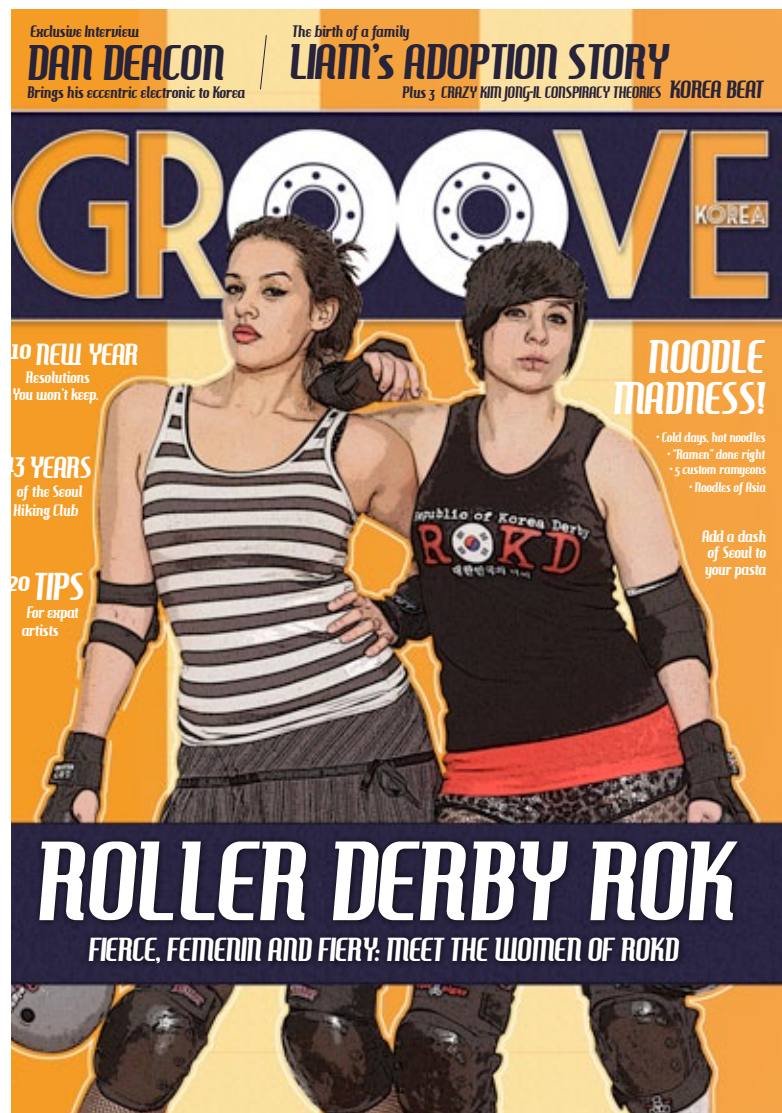
Korea's first roller derby league is close to its first bout. Combining fierceness and femininity, roller derby embraces hard-hitting action for what could be the baddest brawl this side of the DMZ.



Cover Story

ON THE COVER

Roller Derby — story on page 66.



Cover photo by: MIKE HURT / Design by: DANIEL SANCHEZ

On past issues:



December 2011
Christmas in the capital.
TBS eFM anniversary.
Erotic fantasies.



November 2011
Han Mini & the gay
community in Korea.
Odyssey of students.



October 2011
Beer, pregnancy & the
dirty side of Haeundae.
Craic Int. Championship.

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The INBOX

What's on your mind? Share your thoughts on a Groove article: Did you love it? Did it suck? Are you planning a charity concert and you want to spread the word? Let us know on our facebook page or Twitter and we'll print it here. This is your page to get your message out!

Facebook it; tweet it; e-mail it to submissions@groovekorea.com



Love Motel

Band/Pohang • Indie

Love Motel are a rapidly emerging indie band based in Pohang, Korea. They mix pop with a unique indie style. They have been performing all around the country for the past 3 years.

Press contact: Andoni Flores (010-2277-3067)

Gallery Woo

Caricature Cafe • Korea

Upcoming up this January: • Live Caricature • Studio Caricature Illustration • Art Basics • Nude Drawing • Korean Conversation Class. To reserve your spot in these limited classes call:

Contact: Wilfred Lee (010-9595-3555)

Black Illumin

Artist/Singer • Seoul

Her latest release of 2011 it's a song named "Calling Me" produced by The Frat (CA, USA)." It has been an amazing year in SEOUL and I wanted to treat my fans to something special.

Listen to her new single at: www.blackilumin.com

Mannam International

International

CALLING ALL NATIONS!! Mannam International is an association of about 54 volunteer organizations, focusing on art, culture, and volunteer services of any and every kind.

Q&A: mannamvolunteers@gmail.com



Dustin Wilshire

Groove's follower.

"Wanted to let you know personally that I have enjoyed the design changes Groove has implemented. Much nicer to look at. Well done."

Dec. 20/2011

Judith Brummer

Groove's follower.

"Hey there Groove!, just a quick suggestion: I think it would be a good idea if you had a directory for English Speaking Churches."

Dec. 26/2011

Chase Beck

Groove's follower.

"As I designer I find the new changes very accurate. Much more easy to read and easy to interact with. Keep up Groove!"

Dec. 15/2011



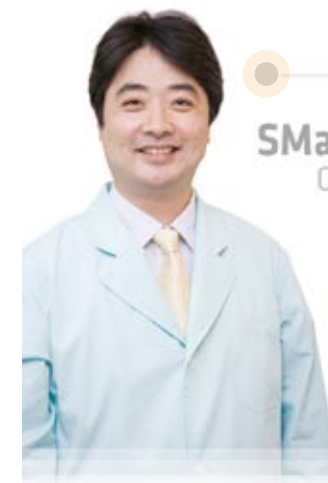
Heriberto Garcia

Groove's follower on Twitter

Food & drink section is definitely very useful, but I still can't find a clear path to happiness through Korean food, what about some help?

Dec. 28/2011

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Member, American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry
Member, American Academy of Osseointegration



UPCOMING Events

January 2st - January 31st

| REMARKABLE

Jan.

*More details in calendar



30% discount off KTX tickets through visitkoreayear.com

Jan. 14

*More details in calendar



Black Water Dragon cruise party 6 p.m., Ka-Brew

Jan. 28

*More details in calendar



Dan Deacon in Seoul @ Rolling Hall (Hongdae)

Jan.

2. Monday

- Ski @ Yongpyong Resort; discount package; Jan 2-5; english.visitkorea.or.kr

- Open mic @ Tony's in Itaewon (Mondays); tonsitaewon.com

- Josef Schulz exhibit The Glory of Nature @ Gallery Lumiere, Jongno-gu; to Jan. 8

Jan.

8. Sunday

- Her Space Holiday in Daejon @ Cantina; 9 p.m.; supercolorsuper.com

- Ski @ High1 Resort; discount package; Jan. 8-11; english.visitkorea.or.kr

- Codependents Anonymous meeting @ the International Lutheran Church; 5 p.m.

Jan.

14. Saturday

- Ka-Brew's Black Water Dragon cruise party; 6 p.m.; kabwekorea@hotmail.co.kr

- Seoul Electronic Music Festival in Ilsan @ Kintex; 3 p.m.; Info: kintex.com

- Bye Bye Sea, Wolverine, Crash @ Rolling Hall (Hongdae); 5 p.m.; rollinghall.co.kr

Jan.

20. Friday

- SIWA ice skating event @ Grand Hyatt Hotel; 3 p.m.; siwapage.com

- Teachers' night @ Big Rock in Gangnam (Fridays); (02) 539-6650

- Free bus Seoul-Gyeongju every day except Monday; visitkorea@chesstours.co.kr

Jan.

26. Thursday

- Men's night @ Craftworks in in Noksapyeong; 1,000-2,000 won off beers

- Ongoing: Fish Market Tour, Vegan Taste Tour, Night Dining Tour; ongofood.com

- 15,000 won all-you-can-drink beer @ Beer Garden, Renaissance Hotel, Gangnam (every day, 6-9 p.m.); (02) 2222-8630

Jan.

3. Tuesday

- 2 For 1 fish & chips @ Woldhound (Tuesdays); wolfhoundpub.com

- Wing night @ 3 Alley Pub in Itaewon; 3alleypub.com

- Warm Painting Group Exhibition @ Gallery Golmok, Yongsan-gu; to Jan. 25

Jan.

9. Monday

- 30% discount off KTX tickets reserved through http://english.visitkoreayear.com (foreigners only)

- Yann Arthus Bertrand's exhibit It's My Home @ Seoul Museum of Art (SeMA), Jongno-gu; to March 15

Jan.

15. Sunday

- Sanirang's Outdoor Ice Climbing Group; 7:30 a.m.; sanirang.net

- Ski @ Yongpyong Resort; discount package; Jan. 15-18 english.visitkorea.or.kr

- Daegwallyeong Snow Festival in Gangwon Province; Jan. 13-21; snowfestival.net

Jan.

21. Saturday

- Free shuttle bus Seoul-Jeonju every day except Monday; Seoul departure 8 a.m.; Jeonju departure 5 p.m.; visitkorea@chesstours.co.kr

- Vodka Night @ Yaletown in Sinchon (Saturdays); Bottle of Russian Vodka 39,000 won; (02) 333-1604

Jan.

27. Friday

- Dan Deacon in Busan @ Vinyl Underground; supercolorsuper.com

- SIWA's Korean sauna visit @ Dargon Hill Spa; 10 a.m.; siwapage.com

- Taebaeksan Snow Festival @ Taebaeksan National Park & downtown Taebaek City; Jan. 27-Feb. 5; festival.taebaek.go.kr

Jan.

4. Wednesday

- Bottomless Fries Night with burger @ Yaletown in Sinchon (Wednesdays); (02) 333-1604

- Cheese steak sandwich night @ Hollywood Grill in Itaewon (Wednesdays); (02) 749-1659

Jan.

10. Tuesday

- Steve McCurry exhibit Companions for the Globe @ Hangaram Art Museum, Seoul Arts Center, Seocho-gu; to March 4

- Hwacheon Ice Festival in Hwacheon-gun, Gangwon Province; narafestival.com

- Free taco with beer @ Panchos in Itaewon; 5-10 p.m.; (02) 792-4767

Jan.

16. Monday

- Wing Night @ Yaletown in Sinchon (Mondays); 400 won/wing; (02) 333-1604

- Message Mondays @ Sky Wellness Center in Itaewon

- Korean calligraphy class every Monday; 10,000 won; m-seohyun@naver.com

Jan.

22. Sunday

- Overeaters Anonymous @ International Lutheran Church (Sundays) ; 7:30 p.m.

- AA meeting @ the International Lutheran Church (Sundays); 5 p.m.

- Sunday Jazz concert @ Once in a Blue Moon in Chungdam-dong; (02) 549-5490

Jan.

28. Saturday

- Dan Deacon in Seoul @ Rolling Hall (Hongdae); supercolorsuper.com

- Inje Icefish Festival @ Inje, Gangwon Province; Jan. 28-Feb. 5

- Taebaeksan Mountain Snow Festival in Gangwon Province; Jan. 27-Feb. 5; festival.taebaek.go.kr

Jan.

5. Thursday

- Her Space Holiday, The Primary @ Dolce Bar in Cheonan; supercolorsuper.com

- Quiz night @ 3 Alley Pub in Itaewon; win beer; 3alleypub.com

- All-you-can drink Makgeolli @ Po-seokjeong in Sinchon; 4,000 won with food purchase; (02) 332-5538

Jan.

11. Wednesday

- Damien Rice @ Olympic Park; 8 p.m.; ticket.interpark.com

- Zadok Ben-David exhibit Blackfield @ Artclub563, Seocho-gu.; to Feb. 10

- Mina Cheon's exhibit Polipop, Political Pop Art @ Sungkok Art Museum, Jongno-gu; to March 11

Jan.

17. Tuesday

- Royal Asiatic Society lecture Park Jiwon short stories; 9 p.m.; raskb.com

- Slider Night @ Yaletown in Sinchon (Tuesdays); 4 for price of 3; (02) 333-1604

- 250 won Buffalo Wings @ Nashville in Itaewon; 02-798-1592

LUNAR NEW YEAR

Jan.

23. Monday

- Royal Asiatic Society's Lunar New Year Excursion @ Seoraksan National Park; 8:30 p.m.; raskb.com

- NANTA open run; nanta.co.kr

- 16,000 won beer buffet @ Platinum in Appgujeong; platinumbeer.com

Jan.

29. Sunday

- Ski @ Yongpyong Resort; discount package; english.visitkorea.or.kr; Jan. 29- feb 1

- Royal Asiatic Society's excursion to Cheolwon County; 8:30 a.m.; raskb.com

- Buy a pizza, get second half off @ Beer O'Clock, Shinchon (Sunday); (02) 333-9733

Jan.

6. Friday

- Bucket night @ Beer O'Clock in Sinchon (Fridays); beeroclock.ca

- Her Space Holiday in Busan @ Ol' 55; 10 p.m.; supercolorsuper.com

- Daegwallyeong Snow Festival in Gangwon Province; to Jan. 21; snowfestival.net

Jan.

12. Thursday

- Open mic @ Orange Tree in HBC (Thursdays); (02) 749-8202

- Student Night @ Yaletown in Sinchon (Thursdays); free beer with burger; (02) 333-1604

Jan.

18. Wednesday

- Quiz night @ Craftworks in Noksapyeong (Wednesdays); craftworkstaphouse.com

- Gran-A is in Novotel Ambassador Doksan all-you-can-drink beer 10,000 won

- Open registration to volunteer at Itaewon Global Village Center; global.seoul.go.kr

Jan.

24. Tuesday

- Half price appetizers @ Hollywood Bar & Grill in Itaewon (Tuesdays); 5-10 p.m.

- Learn about Korea's cuisine with O'ngo culinary tour of Seoul; ongofood.com

- Rocky Mountain Tavern's 300 won Buffalo Wings (Tuesdays); 010-5189-2327

Jan.

30. Monday

- Wing night @ Craftworks in in Noksapyeong; craftworkstaphouse.com

- SIWA's overnight ski trip to Muju resort; siwapage.com; Jan. 30-31

- Book a weekend night by Jan. 31 @ the Hilton and save 25 to 33%

Jan.

7. Saturday

- Free shuttle bus Seoul-Gyeongju every day except Monday; Seoul departure 8 a.m.; Gyeongju Departure 4 p.m.; visitkorea@chesstours.co.kr

- Her Space Holiday in Seoul @ Club FF; 8 p.m.; supercolorsuper.com

Jan.

13. Friday

- Pat Metheny & Larry Grenadier @ Sejong Center for the Performing Arts

- Momgwamaeum, Apollo 18 @ Sangsang Madang; 8 p.m.; sangsangmadang.com

- Nonverbal performance, traditional musical @ Doosan Tower Shopping Mall

Jan.

19. Thursday

- Learn about Korean culture through cuisine. Take an O'ngo cooking class Monday-Friday; ongofood.com

- 30% discount off KTX tickets reserved through http://english.visitkoreayear.com

Jan.

25. Wednesday

- BBQ happy hour @ Oak Room, Seoul Hilton; Mon-Sat, 6-8:30 p.m.; unlimited meat & beer; 34,700 won; (02) 317-3234

- Beirut in Seoul @ AX-Korea; 8 p.m.; Info: ax-korea.co.kr

Jan.

31. Tuesday

- Royal Asiatic Society lecture Introduction to Joseon Dynasty Uigwe @ Somerset Palace; 9 p.m.; raskb.com

- Open mic night (Tuesdays) @ Big Electric Cat in Itaewon; (02) 792-0754

- Pyeongchang Trout Festival in Jinbu-myeon; to Feb. 5; festival700.or.kr

UPCOMING Events

January 2st - January 31st

| MEMORABLE

Jan. 7

*More details in calendar



Her Space Holiday @ Club FF; 8 p.m.; SuperColorSuper

Jan. 11

*More details in calendar



Damien Rice @ Olympic Park 8 p.m.

Jan. 25

*More details in calendar



Quiz night @ Craftworks in Noksapyeong (Wednesdays)25

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Vietnamese man dies at bath house where he worked

A Vietnamese laborer was found dead by a 57-year-old co-worker in the sleeping section of a public bath house where he had been employed.

The incident took place on Dec. 11 in the Cheongdo-eup area of Gyeongsangbuk-do.

The colleague said, "(The Vietnamese man) does odd jobs for the bathhouse, and when he didn't get up in the morning I went to check on him and found that he had died."

Police believe that the man died from overwork since he was employed at a farm by day and in the bathhouse by night.

The investigation is still underway.

Police nab thieves who targeted expats

Police in Jinju have arrested two brothers and a friend on charges of assault and robbery. The men had been targeting foreigners.

Police say the men attacked a 35-year-old Filipino whom had been walking home from a discount store the Sangpyeong-dong area of Jinju. They assaulted the man with a baseball bat and robbed him of 200,000 won (\$177).

The men committed similar crimes against two other foreigners in the week preceding the incident in the same area, stealing some 2.8 million won, police said.

Protestors continue to single out Korea-U.S. FTA for protests

Protestors continue to take issue with the recently passed Korea-U.S. free trade agreement, while mostly ignoring other trade deals to which Korea is a party. The protestors have been holding candlelight vigils and blocking downtown intersections.

The Korean Alliance Against the KORUS FTA has been a lead organizer. Police – which far outnumber the protestors – have struggled to prevent them from blocking traffic. The anti-American trade organization said, "We have to make sure that something as important to the nation as the KORUS FTA is considered by the entire nation. The police are infringing on the freedom of candlelight vigils by trying to block our protests."

Statue of comfort woman erected in front of Japan embassy

A statue of a comfort woman was erected opposite the Japanese embassy in Seoul with a plaque describing their enslavement and sexual exploitation during the Japanese occupation in the first quarter of last century.

The statue was set up by Japanese-Korean citizens' groups.

According to YTN News, the Japanese government strenuously resisted the placement of the statue but was unable to prevent its placement.

Ambassador Fujimura that "(The sexual slavery issue) has been fully and finally resolved and the Japanese government will not be changing its policy regarding the comfort women issue."



January 2012

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SEOUL LOWERS AX ON ENGLISH TEACHERS

Seoul City Council announced that the capital would scrap a program that has been in place for years, which placed native English speaking teachers in classrooms throughout the capital.

Approximately 57 percent of the school board-employed foreign English teachers will be dismissed beginning this year.

Seoul City Council sets the budget for the city's Office of Education. For 2012, 4.4 billion has been allocated for native English speakers in the city's high schools and 4.9 billion won has been set aside for native English speaker teachers in elementary and middle schools.

Most native speaker teachers whose contracts are expiring this year will likely not be re-hired.

Two-hundred and fifty-five native speaker teachers in high schools will be let go, along with 252 in elementary schools and 200 in middle schools; that is a reduction of 57 percent of the 1,245 teachers employed the previous year.

Seoul City Council budgeted 500 million won for on-line English lessons in elementary and middle schools.

"(Korean) teachers will take on a greater role. There will be fewer opportunities for native speakers ... There will be fewer of them starting in 2012," said an official with the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education.

"A native speaker earns on average 42 million won a year, and we concluded that they are not effective enough to justify the cost," another spokesman for the city office of education said. "A survey conducted for us showed that Korean teachers with outstanding English and teaching skills are more effective in the long term."

It's expected that students from low-income families will bear the brunt of the cuts. Most middle- and upper-class students attend private English academies, so they never really relied on English lessons at public schools.

Not everyone at Seoul's education office is in favor of killing the native English teacher program.

"Students from well-to-do families may find lessons from native English-speakers dull because they've been attending private tutoring institutes since they were young," an education official said. "But those from poor families should be given the opportunity to learn English with native speakers at school."

"It is too early to reduce the number of native speakers as long as Korean teachers aren't good enough to replace them."

TWO FOREIGN WORKERS SAY THEY WERE ABUSED

A foreign workers' rights group criticized "the mild" punishment of a Korean manager who it said assaulted his foreign workers. The foreign worker center in charge of the first probe announced it would conduct a second investigation following reports in the media.

The foreign workers' rights group had called for the manager to be transferred to a different position, but no action was taken.

According to the group, in November of last year 30-year-old "Mr. S" and 23-year-old "Mr. P" were verbally and physically abused by their manager at the company, which is located the Gangseo-gu area of Busan.

In one occasion, the two men were grabbed by their collars and pulled for over 300 meters. They say they also suffered other forms of assault.

The attack occurred due to a communication breakdown. The two men had been unable to understand the contents of a work memo from the manager, they said.

After the incident occurred, they contacted the foreign worker group to seek assistance last October.

The group took the two men to the Busan Buk-gu employee aid center, where they produced three photos of the assault that were taken with a cellphone camera. They then requested that the manager be transferred to a different position.

Foreign workers reserve the right to request that a manager be transferred if he or she is found to have assaulted employees.

The company refuted the allegations.

An official with the foreign worker center said that, "after we filed our petition, they waited a month before even beginning their investigation ... We believe that these two men were assaulted and that their manager should be changed."

Choi Sam-heum, the head of the center, said that, "the (final) report has not been filed yet ... We are responsible for 5,000 Korean and foreign workers in our district, yet we have only one investigator, so we are seeking a solution to avoid being seen as uncaring."

'HOMOPHOBIC' ART CAUSES UPROAR AT TOP UNIVERSITY

Controversy is growing after a senior design student at Seoul National University produced a piece of art expressing homophobic sentiments. Though it has drawn outrage for implying that homosexuals should have no rights, some have come to the artist's defense, saying he has the right to free speech.

"Mr. A," a visual design major, has a piece in the university's current exhibit of work by students nearing graduation. The piece is titled "Campaign for the Rights of Heterosexuals." It consists of works created by Mr. A during the semester, including a t-shirt with the phrase "Children are created by a male father and a female mother."

The student included a brief essay saying, "In movies, comic books and novels, small steps towards the positive views of homosexuality has begun to take place ... All life comes from a male and a female, so heterosexuality is proper."

The student has been heavily criticized.

Many posts on an Internet discussion forum for SNU expressed concern that the "art" was in fact a human rights violation. One Twitter user wrote that, "this art student is using the pretext of art to impose his homophobic views."

The controversy started in October when the school's homosexual students organization put up posters asking "What's it like to be gay?" and "What's it like to be lez?"

The art student then took those posters and stamped his question on them, "How could your life be created?"

The art student responded to the uproar. "(The homosexual student organization's) posters made it look like it was no problem at all with homosexuality. I wanted to show that not everyone agrees."

A professor on the judging panel explained that the student has the right to free expression. "Because we have freedom of expression, there were no restrictions. There was no controversy during the judging."

However, one member of the student organization wrote on SNU Life that, "this goes beyond personal feelings and into discrimination against our rights ... It is not an acceptable use of one's freedom of expression to denigrate minorities and deface the means others have used for their expressions to promote one's own."

STUDENTS 49 TEACHERS 35

In the ongoing battle of teacher vs. student, the student is emerging the more violent of the parties for the first time ever. Over the past two years in Gyeonggi Province, the number of instances of students assaulting teachers has surpassed the number of instances of teachers assaulting students.

As society increasingly demands that teachers not beat up their pupils, students have been increasingly taking liberty and assaulting their teachers. Critics say this is harming the atmosphere in classrooms.

On Dec. 17 the Gyeonggi Province Office of Education announced that through September of this year there had been two incidents of teachers assaulting students in elementary schools, 21 in middle schools, and 12 in high schools – for 35 in total. However, there were 49 incidents of students assaulting teachers – one in elementary school, 34 in middle school and 14 in high school.

Last year, the numbers were 39 and 45, respectively.

In 2009, there were 46 instances of reported corporal punishment of students, which fell to 39 last year and 35 this year, but the 13 instances of students assaulting teachers increased to 45 in 2009 and 49 this year.

Students have become more unruly, as there were 2,117 violations of school rules by middle school students in 2008, 2,443 in 2009, 3,051 last year, and 3,420 through September of this year.

For high school students, the numbers were 3,049 in 2008, 3,795 in 2009, 4,072 last year, and 4,548 through September of this year.

"In our school, there have been instances of students assaulting teachers ... After the students' rights ordinance went into effect, teachers could only give students demerits, so the number of expulsions and transfers decreased and the number of rules violations went way up," said a teacher at a middle school in Suwon.

An official with the provincial office of education said: "There seem to be many such stories coming from schools after the Students Bill of Rights was passed. (There are more cases of) students disrespecting teachers."

3 scenarios for new North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un

The Maeil Kyoungjae considers the following three possibilities might occur in the coming years: 1) Sudden change comes from both a coup d'etat from the top and a popular uprising from the bottom.
2) An uprising inspired by economic issues such as lack of food could be something that North Korean authorities would be unable to handle.
3) In the case of a failed succession, there would immediately be a North Korean uprising. If the North Korean economic system and food and energy situations worsen, there could be a revolt. In this case, the report argued, unification might occur swiftly.

South Koreans play it cool as rest of world loses their minds

After the death of Kim Jong-il, an event which had been expected to occur sooner rather than later, South Koreans didn't overreact by stock piling basic necessities like they had after his father died in 1994. In fact, the streets on Seoul resembled any other depressing Monday morning when the news broke.
Some media outlets from around the world were, however, foaming at the mouth, with some predicting war and panic.
Foreign selling on the Korean stock markets spiked on Monday before recovering the next day (after they woke up Tuesday to find that the peninsula didn't implode).

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12 NEWSPAPER REACTIONS TO KIM JONG-IL'S DEATH

- 1. Kyunghyang Shinmun looked forward to possible improvements in the relationship between North and South.
- 2. The Kukmin Ilbo called for the government to prevent a financial panic.
- 3. The Dong-A Ilbo looked back over the disastrous history of North Korea and Kim Jong-il.
- 4. The Maeil Kyoungjae criticized South Korean intelligence for failing to detect that Kim had died until the belated announcement was made days later on North Korean television.
- 5. The Munhwa Ilbo briefly reviewed the history of Kim Jong-il's reign and what his death could mean for the future. It believes that Kim Jong-un may order small attacks on the South to shore up his support, similar to the attacks on the Cheonan and Yeongpyeong Island, which the paper blames him for.
- 6. The Seoul Shinmun considered the possible outcomes of Kim Jong-un failing to be a strong leader, such as a mass influx of refugees.
- 7. The Segye Ilbo called security the No. 1 priority right now. The paper is also very concerned about the South's intelligence failure.
- 8. The Chosun Ilbo looked over Kim Jong-il's time in power and worried that Kim Jong-un will not be able to hold the country together. The paper also lamented North Korea's 24 million citizens are being sacrificed for the needs of Kim Jong-il and the North's desire for nuclear weapons. It said the South's first priority should be to prevent an increase in North Koreans' suffering caused by a military build-up; the second priority should be to achieve nuclear disarmament; and the third should be to relieve the suffering in the North.
- 9. The JoongAng Ilbo called Kim's death an opportunity to join the histories of two nations that share one ethnicity, and that more than anything both nations need to treat Kim's death as a chance to begin a new era.
- 10. Hankyoreh called peace the most important thing on the Peninsula right now. The paper wants South Korea to work with its allies, but also play more of a leading role.
- 11. The Hankuk Ilbo looked over Kim Jong-il's life and said that there will be large changes in North Korea. It warned against pessimism, even though risks are great.
- 12. The Korea Economic Daily called for better collaboration with the South's allies; the protection of national security and the economy and direct communication with the North, as well as for everyone in the South to work together.

3 KIM JONG-IL CONSPIRACY THEORIES

- Death at a villa?
The English Chosun Ilbo, relying partly on a Japanese news report, says that Japanese intelligence told Seoul that they believe Kim was actually at his summer villa when he died. The Japanese believe he collapsed on Dec. 15, not Dec. 17, making the delay of the announcement actually four days – not two.
A "progressive" Korean politician says he received similar information.
- Poisoning?
Hagiwara Ryo, a North Korea expert and journalist in Japan, said in an interview with the conservative newspaper Sankei Shinmun that, "At this stage I have to wonder whether this was an act of terrorism or murder rather than a death from natural causes."
Feeding the poisoning theory is the fact that Pyongyang waited at least two days to announce the death. When Kim Il-sung died in 1994, the news was delayed by one day to confirm the circumstances of his death, but this time there is suspicion whether the longer delay was related to internal questions on the cause of death.
When North Korean authorities die of poisoning, detailed tests, including a full autopsy, are performed. This has intensified the confusion in North Korea over the true cause of Chairman Kim's death.

- A coup d'etat?
One of the wackiest conspiracy theories says there was a coup in North Korea. One blogger wrote about it in a post titled, "The death of Kim Jong-il and the comeback of North Korean news anchor Ri Chun-hui."
The 68-year-old Ri returned to North Korean television to announce the death of Kim after having been absent since Oct. 19.
Ri, the foremost anchor in North Korea, who also announced the death of Kim Il-sung in 1994, is known to have been liked by Kim Jong-il.
"Some are wondering whether Kim Jong-il died when Ri Chun-hui disappeared ... As evidence of a coup d'etat, look at Ri Chun-hui as she announces Kim Jong-il's death. It will raise questions in your mind about whether a coup d'etat was suppressed or if a coup group is in charge of the political situation," he said.

ANALYSIS

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LIAM'S ADOPTION STORY 20
Romin Lee Johnson's photo essay on adoption
PLIGHT OF THE MOON BEAR 26
As their numbers dwindle, their medicinal value only rises

Liam's Adoption story

▼ I nodded to DJ, the social worker, that I was ready. I was standing at the back of a small meeting room at Holt Adoption Services with a precocious 13-month-old Korean toddler and his foster family, my camera at the ready. DJ ducked out of the room into the hallway to retrieve Ashley and Kurt, the toddler's adoptive parents, who were in the final few moments of their year-long journey for their son Liam.

Words & Photography by
ROMIN LEE JOHNSON

Highlight



Meet Liam

Photographer Romin Lee Johnson documents the adoption of 13-month-old Liam to Ashley and Kurt. You can follow Liam's adventure on Ashley's blog at www.ourhappyeverafters.com. The opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of Groove Korea. To comment, e-mail opinion@groovekorea.com. — Ed.

DJ opened the door to Ashley, followed by a beaming Kurt. Click. Her eyes locked with her son; she stood frozen in the doorway for a moment as her hands moved to cover her face. Click-click. She took a tentative step forward. Then another. Emboldened, she approached her son assuredly with the inviting hands of a mother. Click. Liam's foster father passed him over into Ashley's arms. She held his face against her cheek, closed her eyes, and started to cry.

Liam turned back to his foster family, and reached out to his foster mother, whose emotions finally betrayed her otherwise stoic demeanor. The whole foster family was in tears.

I felt humbled by the moment. Much of the next 30 minutes was a blur of clicks and changing rolls of film.

After the meeting was over and the final papers signed; after presents were exchanged and countless tears were wiped from cheeks flushed with unguarded emotion; after the goodbyes and prayers were said and wished, I felt I needed to share what I had just witnessed.

"First meet at an adoption > first look at a wedding," I tweeted. The first meet at an adoption is greater than the first look at a wedding.

You see, much of my time as a professional documentary photographer has been occupied shooting weddings. As such, many of my twitter followers are fellow wedding photographers. The "first look" is a staple moment of many weddings. It's the first time the groom sees his bride after she's put on the dress. It's a moment that evokes strong emotions, a moment when the reality of the wedding hits the couple full-force.

I've documented over 100 weddings, and I've never gotten chills like this. It seems obvious now, but I didn't appreciate then that I was witnessing only the latest chapter in a long, arduous adoption story. If it takes a village to raise a child, it must also take a village to assist in adopting one.

Ashley later told me that they were truly lucky to be able to bring Liam home this year. They decided in September 2010 that they wanted to adopt a

child from Korea after a month of prayer and consideration. After sending in their application to Holt along with the necessary documentation, they were nearly matched to a special-needs child, but it didn't work out. The months passed. Autumn gave way to winter; then winter to spring.

In March, they were matched to a healthy 8-month-old boy. They were ecstatic.

Their journey was only just beginning, though. More paperwork. I-600. Waiting. Legals. Fingerprinting. Packets. More waiting. Phone and e-mail tag with the embassy. A home study. The international adoption process is necessarily demanding. A gauntlet of paperwork and bureaucracy to prove your mettle.

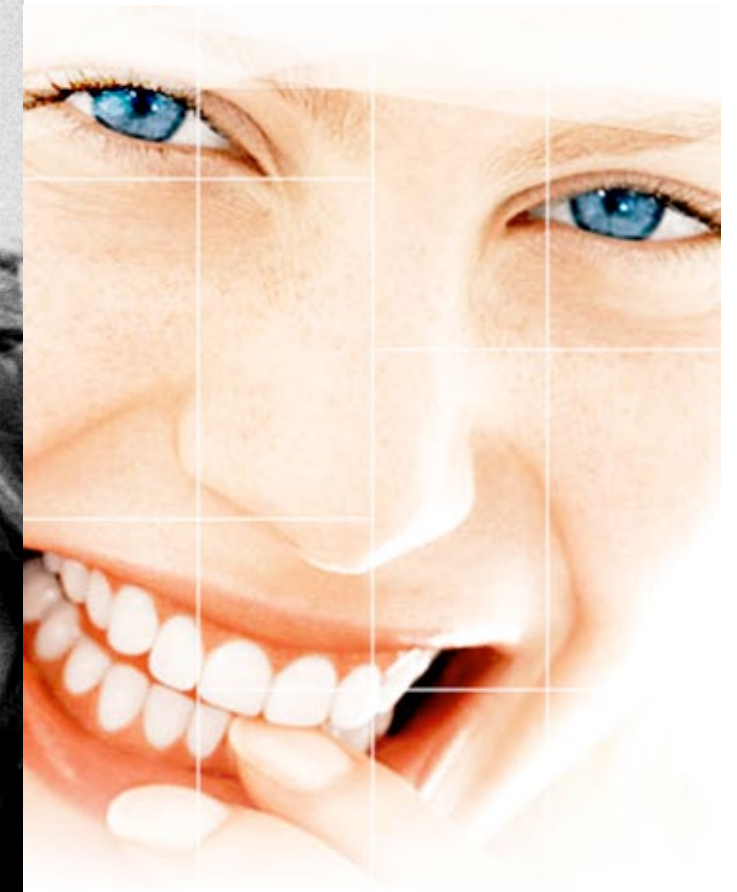
The Korean government is making it more difficult for international adoptions to take place. In an attempt to promote domestic adoptions, the government has been steadily decreasing the number of Emigration Permits (EP) it issues for the purposes of international adoption

each year. Once the annual EP quota is reached, the remaining applicants must wait until the following year to be processed. Each year, the quota drops.

Furthermore, the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) announced in June that it would be halting EP processing for several months. More waiting. The MOHW resumed application processing in August, but it was announced that EPs would be prioritized for children with Korean-American adoptive parents. Since neither Ashley nor Kurt had Korean heritage, it was possible that Liam's EP would be delayed until 2012.

September rolled around and Ashley received word that Liam's EP was finally approved. After a visit to the embassy and Liam having his visa physical for travel clearance, all that was left was to wait for the travel call from Holt.

On Oct. 10, 13 months after they made the decision to adopt a child from Korea, the call finally came – a week later, after a mad flurry of e-mails and logistics, they were on a plane to Seoul.



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Takeover Certificate

DJ opened the door to Ashley, followed by a beaming Kurt. Click. Her eyes locked with her son; she stood frozen in the doorway for a moment as her hands moved to cover her face. Click-click. She took a tentative step forward. Then another. Emboldened, she approached her son assuredly with the inviting hands of a mother. Click. Liam's foster father passed him over into Ashley's arms. She held his face against her cheek, closed her eyes, and started to cry.

I found myself in a crowded meeting room that was brimming with emotion and tears, bearing witness to what filmmaker Caveh Zahedi describes as a "holy moment". (Remember Richard Linklater's "Waking Life?" [2001])

The foster family made their way out of the room first while Ashley and Kurt finalized the paperwork with DJ. Ashley's father, who had been playing videographer throughout the meeting, put his camcorder away and began packing the gifts left by the foster family. Liam spent our final few minutes in the meeting room climbing over the couches, ripping through gift wrappers, doing things that toddlers so love to do, blissfully unaware that his life had just dramatically changed.

We made our way to the street, Liam babbling and poking, safe in the arms of his mother. We hailed a cab and made our way back toward their hotel for lunch. Sitting in the back of the cab with Ashley, Kurt and Liam, I managed to take a few final shots. It was beginning to dawn on Liam that his foster family wasn't around, and he began to grow agitated, calling, "Omma, omma?" Ashley held him close and hummed, lovingly stroking his hair as he drifted to sleep, a single tear falling slowly down his cheek.

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The Plight Of the moon bear

In Korea, it is estimated there are 1,400 bears in captivity for the purpose of bile extraction on around 100 farms.

by DAVID JOSEF VOLODZKO
ILLUSTRATION BY MATT FERGUSON
(INKONPAPER.ORG.UK)

Before over-hunting cut their numbers, Asiatic black bears occupied a swath of land from Japan to France, but now their western border barely reaches Iran and they're in fewer and fewer places east of this.

There are now fewer than 30 in the forests of South Korea, where they're known as bandalgaseumgom, or "half-moon chest bears" – moon bears for short. This is a reference to the white crescent marks across their chests. Presumably it was this distinction, along with their natural ability to walk on two legs, that made them popular in circus shows of the 19th century. If you've ever seen footage of a bear on a tricycle, chances are it was a moon bear.

In the 21st century, they're exploited for their paws and gallbladder bile. The bile has traditionally been prescribed for such a wide variety of ailments that it's marketed as a veritable panacea, or more accurately a modern Snake Oil remedy.

Modern studies have found some merit in particular applications. The metabolic byproduct found in the bile is known as ursodeoxycholic acid, or Ursodiol, and has been shown to reduce cholesterol production and temporarily diminish the size of gallstones. Ursodiol is also the only FDA-approved treatment for primary biliary cirrhosis, but its use has not been found to have any effect on the mortality rate of patients. And recently, Ursodiol has been found to help prevent heart arrhythmia.

It is hoped that such findings will promote the development of synthetic Urodiol, since poaching will surely drive the species to extinction before meeting the needs of a fraction of the world's heart attack victims.

Korea's bears

In Korea, it is estimated there are 1,400 bears in captivity for the purpose of bile extraction on around 100 farms.

Extraction works like this: A worker will gouge a hole in his belly, allowing the bile from his gallbladder to ooze into a bowl below. They'll have to repeatedly puncture the pus that forms in order to prevent the wound from healing, thus increasing the risk of infection. Revolting though it sounds, this is the "humane" method. Other clever approaches involve rusty metal catheters that can lead to malignant tumors.

All this happens despite the fact that the moon bear is an endangered species.

In September, SBS reported on an undercover visit to a bear farm in Gyeonggi Province, where over 50 bears were being raised illegally. The reporter witnessed the milking of bile from a live bear. Draining bile from a live bear is illegal and according to Korean law, bears must be 10 years of age to be legally slaughtered for medicinal purposes.

Following is the English SBS transcript, courtesy of Bear Necessity Korea:

The reporter visited the farm under the guise of an eager customer. The farmer took him inside and fired a sedation dart at one of his bears. The bear began to wander until it collapsed. The farmer emphasized that the bile was "fresh," and that the milking would occur as quickly as possible.

Using an ultrasound machine, the farmer located the gall bladder and roughly pushed a large syringe into the bear's body to draw out "dark green bile." He added that he was "feeling generous," and told the reporter he would give him extra bile so there would be a total of 120 to 130 cc. One hundred cubic centimeters costs approximately \$5,000 in today's market.

The incident was reported to the police and charges were laid.

Save the bears

One of the organizations working to save these bears is Animals Asia. Founded in 1998, Animals Asia currently has moon bear rescue centers in China and Vietnam. Founder and CEO Jill Robinson, MBE, became involved after visiting a bear farm in 1993. She says her visit that day changed everything. "Witnessing row after row of caged and tortured bears, knowing my own species was responsible for this cruelty, and no one apart from the bear farmers was aware of their plight."

Animals Asia has had success in China. Robinson photographed a bear farm and published the images. That's when a Hong Kong-based businessman who saw the images put her in touch with David Chu Yu Lin, honorary advisor to the China Wildlife Conservation Association in Beijing. Thanks to his help, Robinson had the ear of the CWCA, and after two years of negotiations, authorities in China agreed to rescue 500 bears from bile farms. Still, she estimates that 14,000 bears remain in captivity throughout Asia. "Thankfully," she says, "there is growing outrage in China."

She believes a tipping point is fast approaching. "Our research

also shows that the contaminated bile being extracted from the bodies of such diseased and dying animals is not only compromising the welfare of the bears but now very clearly affecting the health of those who consume this substance," she said. "Doctors in Vietnam are 'whistle blowing' and announcing how patients have died after drinking bile that is clearly containing pus, bacteria, cancer cells, blood, urine and feces."

As public sentiment turns against these practices, governments are beginning to step forward. The moon bear is already a protected species in China and Japan, but with what success these regulations will meet remains in question, particularly in a market valuing bears at up to \$2,000 each.

Political support

In Korea, efforts to garner political support have proven difficult, but a recent bill brought forward by the Democratic Labor Party's Heong Hee-deok seeks to make it illegal to breed moon bears, and support for such a measure among South Koreans is growing.

The timing is crucial, as the bears' situation here is dire.

In an interview with the Korea Herald, Heong explained how the current system governing moon bear breeding is dysfunctional. "The Korean government, especially the Ministry of Environment, has operated the work of species restoration," he said. "But on the other side, the government has permitted farmers to collect gall bladder from bears. It is a contradictory system. Bears are wild animals, not livestock, but there are still many bear livestock farms in Korea."

The bill, called the Special Law on Bear Farm Management, would lay the groundwork to outlaw bear farming in Korea. But time is quickly running out. If the bill does not pass by February, it will fail.

There are still major problems to work out even if the bill passes: The issues of farmer compensation and accommodation of the 1,400 bears have to be resolved. There is currently not a sanctuary in Korea that could handle the large number of bears. Animal rights groups fear that if the bill passes as is, it would lead to euthanasia of the bears in Korea or selective rehabilitation with some euthanasia.

According to Kelly Frances, founder of Bear Necessity Korea (bearnecessitykorea.com), fewer than 20 reside in Jirisan Park, where they are monitored by the staff of the Jirisan Restoration

Center. "I believe our last count was 18, and the number fluctuates but never rises above 20."

Bear Necessity Korea would like to see the creation of a sanctuary comparable to the one run by Animals Asia in Chengdu, China.

"I see the bill as a tentative first step," Frances told Groove Korea. "Whether or not it passes or fails, it's a dialogue initiative. Some aspects of the proposed bill are straightforward, such as the proposed ban on breeding, prohibition of further bear sales, regulation of existing farm bears, penal regulations, and a step in the direction of farmer compensation."

She adds: "Within the next few months, we expect more answers."

Sympathy for the animals may not be as strong as some would prefer, but self-preservation is an endless source of outrage that's never so sweetly sparked as when people are told there's cancer and feces in their medicine.

What you can do

If you'd like to help, you can contact The Bear Truth (thebeartruth.org) and Bear Necessity Korea (bearnecessitykorea.com), both of which are non-profit organizations fighting to raise awareness about the issue. Bear Necessity Korea accepts online donations via PayPal.

Also, drop by Craftworks Tap-house & Bistro in Itaewon 2-dong for their Jirisan Moon Bear IPA.

The opinions expressed here are the author's and do not represent those of Groove Korea. To submit a letter to the editor, e-mail opinion@groovekorea.com. Submissions may be edited for length and clarity. – Ed.

FOOD & DRINK

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5 CUSTOM Ramyeons

• You've probably had students who bragged about how good their ramyeon was. "I boil water and... I put in the noodles... and... and..." Yeah, yeah, we know. You should audition for Top Chef Korea.

But there are a few quick, easy ways to turn basic ramyeon into something tastier and more substantial. Groove got the scoop from a few Seoulites (Curiously, custom ramyeon recipes seem to be the domain of male readers).



After-Hockey Ramyeon

Roger Gribbins
USA

Gribbins' ramyeon recipe calls for Jin Ramyeon – not to be confused with Shin. Jin is beef-flavored and comes in mild or spicy. You can use either one for After-Hockey Ramyeon. What sets it apart from the others is its use of sesame oil. Gribbins said he was searching for the right ingredient to elevate his ramyeon one day when it hit him – sesame oil is perfect.

Make normal Jin Ramyeon. Add an egg and stir.

Add two teaspoons of sesame oil. When the ramyeon is done, throw a handful of chopped green onions on top.



Hangover Ramyeon

Jimin Kim
Korea

Nothing sets Kim right after a night of drinking like his special hangover ramyeon. It's basically extra-spicy Shin Ramyeon, with a handful of bean sprouts thrown in. Here's how you make it:

Make normal Shin Ramyeon. Add in "gochu karu" (Korean chili flakes) to make it extra spicy. One to two tablespoons should do it.

With about a minute left to go, add in a handful of crunchy bean sprouts.

According to Kim, the bean sprouts are good for your stomach and help your body process the poisons from the night before.



Hongdae Ramyeon

Sean Graham
Canada

Graham developed a taste for this simple ramyeon late one night in Hongdae. Perhaps the easiest of the custom ramyeons, all you need is a little processed cheese and an egg. Here's the recipe:

Make normal Shin Ramyeon, but only add half the spice.

While it's boiling, add an egg and stir.

When you turn the heat off, put a slice of processed cheese on top.

Graham said this ramyeon is good for those who don't like the spice so much.



Chammers Ramyeon

Josh Foreman
USA

Foreman doesn't eat ramyeon often, but when he does, it's "chammers." Can you guess what the main ingredient is? That's right, tuna, or "chamchi" in Korean. Timing is important with this recipe. Here's the recipe:

Make normal Shin Ramyeon. After a minute of boiling the noodles, add an egg and stir.

With 30 seconds left, add a medium-sized can of drained tuna. It's important that the tuna doesn't cook for long.

The tuna adds texture and flavor to this ramyeon, and the egg makes the broth oh so good.



N.Z. Camping Ramyeon

Adam Farrell
Canada

Farrell discovered this ramyeon gem while trekking in New Zealand. He needed a quick, cheap, substantial meal, and this is what he came up with.

Make basic ramyeon; it's important that you use a tin cup or bowl.

Put a layer of pepperoni or salami atop of the noodles while it's still cooking.

Put a layer of cheese on top of that. Let the cheese melt, and enjoy.

"The pepperoni added the heartiness I was looking for," Farrell said. "And you better believe that last pepperoni was scraping around in that cheese."

GK

'20s chic in Itaewon

by ELAINE KNIGHT
photos by RYAN NOEL



“I felt like a character in the Great Gatsby, enjoying an afternoon listening to some swing band jazz music, sipping tea, or something stronger accompanying an afternoon brunch.”

Darell Mahoney and Tae-Eung Kim were looking for a dining and drinking experience they hadn't found in Seoul. They were looking for a certain feeling when out on the town. So they set out, as they had done before with Buddha's Belly, to build what they couldn't find, a “dinner club” with an ambience of exclusivity, the feel of a 1920s jazz club mixed with the warmth of a European cafe. They succeeded.

The red letters of Berlin's sign glowing over its unique glass balcony have become an unmistakable Itaewon landmark. According to Mahoney, the restaurant is heavily influenced by the vibrant art and culture scene in Berlin, and tries for a fusion of eastern and western food. “Berlin was divided between East and West then was unified when the Berlin wall came down,” Mahoney said. “The joining resulted in a vibrant, youthful and global art, culture and food scene. We try to capture that at Berlin.”

The restaurant has the ambience of a 1920s jazz club with a modern twist. Sitting on the terrace area overlooking the green of the Yongsan Army base and the Itaewon gate, I felt like a character in the Great Gatsby, enjoying an afternoon listening to some swing band jazz music, sipping tea, or something stronger accompanying an afternoon brunch. From the terrace seating, I observed people bustling down on the street as the traffic rushed by in the cold. I sat relaxed, feeling comfortably removed.

I was surprised to learn that Berlin is open from 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. everyday with a special lunch menu on the weekdays and brunch service on the weekend. Having thought the restaurant was only open for dinner, I was perplexed as to what might be served for brunch/lunch. German food, I thought? The answer was a resounding no.

The weekend brunch menu was eclectic, a fusion of East and West with normal brunch fare such as toast, eggs and bacon along with fish and chips in a tempura style, and other delicious fare. There were a number of vegetarian options, such as spinach and cheese ravioli with mushroom

cream sauce and fresh apple cinnamon French toast. Berlin will also make accommodations for food allergies.

To start, we ordered “Qi-Booster” tea and red ginseng tea. The teas are made using traditional Asian medicinal techniques. The ginseng tea, although earthy as expected, was not bitter, but mellow and sweet thanks to a touch of honey. The Qi-Booster was served in a beautiful glass teapot complete with a small hourglass to ensure it had been properly steeped.

We tried the chicken tzatziki with a side salad. The salad was colorful and served with a sweet but light balsamic vinaigrette. The scattering of watercress added a strong and peppery taste, providing a contrast in the flavor profile that gave a fuller dimension to the salad. The pairing of Tzatziki sandwich with the salad was thoughtful and well executed. The sandwich was surprisingly good. The bread was sweet and nutty and added to the dish rather than simply delivering the sandwich's contents. The chicken in tzatziki sauce was tender and light.

The French toast was a pleasant surprise. It was unexpectedly light and tasted like apple pie. This masterful dish is a must try if you are going to have brunch at Berlin.

The most traditional brunch fare on the menu, the Berlin Breakfast, consisted of scrambled eggs, toast, bacon, fried tomatoes and mushrooms. Like the French toast, the Berlin Breakfast was surprisingly light. Piled atop the pesto toast, everything was as it should be. The Eggs were light; the bacon nicely crisp and meaty; the mushrooms and tomatoes delicately grilled; and no weighty greasiness to be found.

Although 1920s jazz was playing during brunch, perfectly complimenting the atmosphere, Berlin will shift the musical focus in the evenings with DJs on Thursday, Friday and Saturday night. Reservations and private bookings are available, and parking (limited) may be reserved with a phone call. The lunch menu runs about 12,000 won and dinner for two around 50,000 won.

GK

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PHONE
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RAMEN DONE RIGHT

in Myeong-dong

Photos & Story by JOSH FOREMAN

INFORMATION

LOCATION: MYEONG-DONG

Kenzo Ramen is located on the main shopping street of Myeong-dong. To get there, turn left out of Myeong-dong Station, exit six. Walk about 250 meters down the main shopping street. Keep going straight after it intersects the other large shopping street. Kenzo is on the right past McDonalds and KFC. If you pass Jamba Juice, you went too damn far.

PRICE RANGE
KRW
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“

The cabbage leaves, swallowed up almost immediately by the thick, porky broth, turned out to have a negligible effect on the taste of the dish. ”

• R-A-M-E-N. Notice there was no “y” in that. No “o” either. Shin may be fine for a hungover morning, but this is the real stuff, the stuff you might find in a cramped little joint in Tokyo. This is Kenzo Ramen.

Kenzo, just off the busiest street in Myeong-dong, serves Japanese-style ramen in big bowls. The place opened in 1999, and has garnered a following judging by the white autographed pages taped up in its little window.

Their specialty is authentic ramen, different from instant ramen (or “ramyeon” here in the ROK), in the emphasis on high-quality broth. Their menu gives a brief explanation of how their broth is made: “Put in chicken bone, meat, many vegetables... simmered for a long time.”

The different ramens at Kenzo are differentiated mainly by their respective broths; one is miso-based, another is soy-based. The bowl we tried was “tonkatsu ramen,” made with stock from pork bones. The broth was rich and milky, mouth-coating, opaque (you know that’s always a good sign). It is the star of the dish. The actual noodles are there, but they take second stage. The tonkatsu ramen (“hit!”) came garnished with a few cabbage leaves, a slice of slow-cooked pork belly, and many bean sprouts. The cabbage leaves, swallowed up almost immediately by the thick, porky broth, turned out to have a negligible effect on the taste of the dish. The noodles, too, were secondary. The bean sprouts provided a major contrast in textures. They were crunchy, where the noodles were fairly soft and the broth silky.

The restaurant is much taller than it is wide. The first floor is where the cooking takes place, and the kitchen takes up most of the space down there. There are a few stools around a little bar, but the 25-seat second floor is roomier and has a nice view of the street below. It was crowded the few times we visited, and the sounds of slurping/tissues being ripped from boxes filled the space.

The restaurant is owned by Lee Kipil, a small, wiry man who speeds around the place wearing a denim apron, delivering plates of food to his customers.

Kenzo also serves Japanese-style curry, fried chicken and donkas. The curry comes with little bits of friend things, oysters for example. All the menu items are below 10,000 won.

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COLD DAYS, hot noodles

By ELAINE KNIGHT
Photos by RYAN NOEL

When your bones have been chilled by the cold, look to a hot bowl of noodles to warm the soul.



The ultimate comfort food.

Noodles are the ultimate comfort food. They come in all sizes (long, short, thin, thick, flat, round, helix, cubes, cut, etc.) and can be prepared in many ways (boiled, braised, sautéed, fried). Through all the noodle's diversity, one fact remains unchanged: A well-prepared noodle dish will always fill the stomach with a warm feeling. Like a baby after drinking a bottle of milk, you'll be happy and better able to relax and enjoy life's pleasures.

Each region of the world has its version of the humble starch. Although derived from simple ingredients, the final product is (usually) better than the sum of its parts. It can be served hot or cold, Simple or intricate. It may contain multiple starches as its base ingredient (potato, wheat, buckwheat, yams, rice, flour, etc).

I profess my love of noodle dishes. Cold somen, or buckwheat noodles during the summer heat; Warm champon or ramen in the winter; Noodles for special occasions or to celebrate a birthday with some extremely long-stranded noodle dish such as Japchae, Lomein and Pancit. I remembered having to slurp long stranded noodles on my birthdays; you know, to live long and prosper.

Another interesting noodle note is its potential flavor profile. What other dish can be served sweet or sour, spicy or mild, as an appetizer, savory offering or even dessert? There is a noodle dish for every mood and every season.

Even noodle-eating culture is different around the globe. In Japan, you are supposed to show your appreciation for the dish by slurping loudly. In Korea, you don't lift your soup bowl as you might in Japan or elsewhere in Asia. In Italy, you eat seconds, either because it was good or as not to offend your nona.

Noodles as a comfort food, never fails to satisfy. Whether simply served hot or cold with broth (like Somen, Udon or Ramen) or intricately with artfully cut vegetables and noodle shapes (like Chow Fun, Pancit or Japchae), it always hits the right notes. The possibilities are endless. The noodle is only limited by its cook.

This winter season when your bones have been chilled by the cold, look to a hot bowl of noodles to warm the soul.

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The noodles of Asia

By GROOVE STAFF

KOREA Chapjae

The semi-transparent noodles in this dish are made from sweet potato, which accounts for their sweetness and stretchability. They're also sometimes sweetened with sugar. These are the noodles you find served with saucy beef and sesame oil in bulgogi, or mixed with seasonal vegetables in side dishes. The noodles can be served hot or cold.

JAPAN Nagasaki Champon

This Chinese-inspired dish is made with fried pork and a broth of chicken and pork bones. It's basically a variant of ramen; it's made with egg noodles. This is definitely a cold-weather soup, as it's served hot with plenty of broth. Korea has its own version of the dish: jjamppong. Can you guess what the difference is? That's right; the Korean version is much spicier.

VIETNAM Pho

This Chinese-inspired dish is made with fried pork and a broth of chicken and pork bones. It's basically a variant of ramen; it's made with egg noodles. This is definitely a cold-weather soup, as it's served hot with plenty of broth. Korea has its own version of the dish: jjamppong. Can you guess what the difference is? That's right; the Korean version is much spicier.

THAILAND Pad Thai

The semi-transparent noodles in this dish are made from sweet potato, which accounts for their sweetness and stretchability. They're also sometimes sweetened with sugar. These are the noodles you find served with saucy beef and sesame oil in bulgogi, or mixed with seasonal vegetables in side dishes. The noodles can be served hot or cold.

CHINA Ants Climbing a Tree

This uniquely named dish is made with Chinese vermicelli noodles, which are made from mung beans. They're so thin they don't need to be boiled, only steeped in hot water. The dish gets its name from the pieces of minced pork in it. They get tangled in the vermicelli noodles, and thus look like ants climbing a tree. I guess.



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Paella's lesser-known cousin

By PALOMA JULIAN



"In anticipation of the apocalypse, I want to share with you a recipe for a powerful meal. Carbohydrates have always helped me in crisis times."

- Dreams of the holidays, airports, the never-ending family dinners – it's all come to an end and the new year awaits. 2012 is here and it seems it is going to be anything but boring.

If you don't believe it, listen to this: This year we will enjoy the Olympics in London; the 2012 World Expo will be held in Yeosu; in May there is going to be a total solar eclipse; and of course, the world will end. If it does, at least it won't happen until December.

In anticipation of the apocalypse, I want to share with you a recipe for a powerful meal. Carbohydrates have always helped me in crisis times.

Without further ado I introduce "fideua," the paella's lesser-known cousin.

What makes fideua special? It uses noodles instead of rice and its colorful history.

True story: There was a fisherman who had to cook paella for everybody on his boat several days a week. Every time he cooked it, the captain had huge portions and nobody else got enough food.

Fed up with the situation (pardon the pun), Mr. Fisherman decided to try swapping the rice for noodles to see if the captain's appetite would be sated sooner, thus leaving more food for the rest of the crew. Unfortunately it didn't work. But he did become famous for this dish and now there is not a restaurant by the Mediterranean that doesn't offer it.

The fact that we know the name of the fisherman, Joan Batiste Pascual (born in 1915), makes fideua one of the few Spanish dishes with a traceable origin. How cool would it be to be remembered for a great dish at the end of the world?

Fiduela

Fiduela was created by the fisherman Joan Batiste of Spain.



RECIPE Fiduela

INGREDIENTS

Serves 6

- A handful of shrimp.
- 2 slices of monkfish.
- 1/2 kg of noodles (my favorite for this dish is vermicelli, but it is up to you).
- 2 cloves of garlic.
- 4 medium red tomatoes.
- 1 green pepper.
- 1 bit of saffron.
- 1 cup of olive oil.
- 1/2 l. fish stock.
- Salt

PREPARATION

- Make the fish stock. I like to make it with the bones of the monkfish and some of the shrimp. Boil them in water for 20 minutes max, then set the shrimp aside.

• In a big pan or pot (better if it's made of terracotta), pour the olive oil. When the oil is hot, add the rest of the shrimp, and the monkfish. When the shrimp get red and the monkfish starts to brown, set both aside.

- Cut the tomato, green pepper, and garlic into small squares and fry them on low heat in the same pan that you have been using.

• When they are caramelized, add the saffron and mix everything together for a couple of minutes.

Then add the noodles to the veggies, and fry them a little. You want them to be a little crispy after this step, so don't cook them too much.

- Add the fish stock, and on high heat let it cook for 15 minutes. Add the monkfish and shrimp you had set aside for the last three minutes.

• Salt.

- When it's finished the last trick is to put the pan in the oven for 5 minutes to help the stock evaporate and to make the noodles crispier and browner.

Note 1:

This dish is eaten with a bit of allioli (garlic mayonnaise). Warming: don't kiss anybody after eating it.

Note 2:

Use the recipe as a guide; you can change the fish for whatever you have in the fridge.



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Forget restaurant pasta; this is for real

By READ URBAN
Photos by ELIZABETH PAPILE

Italian food looms large on the food landscape, and pasta and pizza will always be at the center of it. I, like a lot of people, grew up on pasta. I ate my fair share of spaghetti and meatballs, cold pasta salads, and lasagna. That isn't a complaint, just a fact. As commonplace as pasta was in my household, there was always one dish my mom made every so often that held my attention. It was a dish no one else knew about (at least in my eyes) that blended household staples together in such a way as to create totally new flavors. She didn't make it often, I'm not sure why, but when she did I held in my excitement and waited patiently at the dinner table.

Pasta alla Carbonara is a simple pasta dish consisting of bacon, black pepper, eggs, and cheese. Each person adds his or her own twist to the classic, but at the heart of a carbonara lie those four things. Cream is not used in the recipe, a common occurrence in restaurants, only eggs and parmesan to create the sauce. The heat of the pasta cooks the egg through, creating a silky sauce, coating the pasta. Crispy bacon adds backbone to the dish, which is finished off with black pepper. Fresh pepper is crucial in carbonara, and I use plenty of it to give it a nice bite at the end.

It is one of the simplest pasta dishes I know how to make, but it is still impressive. I will never order it at a restaurant because cooking it at home probably takes half the time and will be twice as good. This recipe is in my arsenal of quick, cheap, autopilot dishes, something I can make when I am tired and worn down but still don't want to sit in front of a bowl of cereal at 8 p.m. Pasta alla Carbonara is hearty, rich, and warming, something we all need in the middle of this Seoul winter. I have adapted my recipe to the challenges of living in Seoul. Samgeopsal, cut thin, stands in for the bacon. Obviously, if you come across some quality bacon or pancetta, use that instead, but here in Korea we often must do with what we have. You miss the cured pork product but still get all the pork fat. The other major change in my recipe is using the rendered pork fat to caramelize large Korean green onions and toss them through the finished



"Pasta alla Carbonara is hearty, rich, and warming, something we all need in the middle of this Seoul winter."

dish. I don't throw in green peas, or broccoli (both common additions in some places), I just stick to a few quality ingredients and let them do the talking.

If I haven't sold you on pasta alla carbonara already, well then, I don't know what else I can do. Crispy pork, caramelized onions, eggs and cheese should be enough to sway the toughest critic. All I can say is this: take 30 minutes out of your evening and make this recipe. Eat this alone or make it for a friend. Read a book or put on some bad TV. Just enjoy the food and the comfort that it brings.



RECIPE Pasta a la Carbonara

INGREDIENTS

Serves 2

- 2 servings of dried spaghetti
- 2 eggs, room temperature
- 1/2 cup of grated parmesan cheese
- 1 thick slab of pork belly (samgeopsal), finely diced
- 1 1/2 cup of finely slice large green onion (or leek)
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- freshly ground pepper
- 2 tablespoons of olive oil

Set a large pot of salted water on the stove to boil. Add the olive oil to a saute pan over medium-low heat along with the pork belly. Cook until crispy.

Remove the pork and drain on a paper towel. Drain off all but two tablespoons of fat from the pan and add the onions, cooking over a low heat until soft and golden brown, about 10 minutes.

Add the garlic and cook for another two to three minutes, then remove from the heat. Whisk the eggs with the cheese. Season with salt and pepper. When the water boils, add the pasta and cook to the packages directions.

Right before you drain it, remove a half cup of cooking liquid.

Drain the pasta and return it to the pot. Add the egg and cheese mixture to the pasta, stirring to incorporate. Use the reserved pasta water to thin out the sauce (this can range from 2 tablespoons to the full half cup), making sure it coats the pasta smoothly and it doesn't clump together.

You are looking for a velvety texture to the final sauce.

Add the bacon and green onions and season with a generous pinch or two of fresh ground pepper.

Taste and adjust your seasons then transfer it to a large bowl or individual plates. Garnish with fresh green onion, more black pepper and grated cheese.



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Date 2012. **1.8** (Sun) 08:00~14:00
Location **The Haeundae Beach
Event Square**

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is the
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- Additional Information : [Busanilbo 82-\(0\)51-461-4437/8](http://busanilbo.com)
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Polar Bear Sw

08:00 ~ 09:30 Confirm identification of participants
09:35 ~ 11:00 Event Program
11:00 ~ 11:10 Opening Ceremony
11:15 ~ 11:20 Warming Up
11:20 ~ 12:00 Polar Bear Swim
12:00 ~ 13:00 Fin Swimming Tournament
※Schedules are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances.



DAN DEACON

THE ONE SHOW NOT TO MISS IN 2012

BY KATHY KEARNS
PHOTOS BY Michael Orlosky and Josh Sisk

Dan Deacon

"I've got a bunch of days off in Korea, so I'm really looking forward to seeing the country and taking in as much of the city and the as possible. I know it's going to be really cold, but I'm just really excited to go. I've got a friend who lives in Seoul so I think we're going to have a good time."

You may not know Dan Deacon, but you should. A key figure in the growing DIY music scene, he has paved his own way as a musician without the help of the traditional music industry and has been gradually cultivating an experimental music revolution. His eccentric electronic music is known for causing crowds to break out into manic dance parties at his live shows, where audience participation is the norm. Based in Baltimore, Deacon has come a long way since his first U.S. tour when he survived on nothing but canned vegetables and peanut butter.

Today he's managed to pull together a following that has taken him all the way to Asia and he was even asked to score the latest Francis Ford Coppola film, "Twixt," coming out next year.

Placing a strong emphasis on community in all of his work, Deacon is known for being a founding member of the well-known Wham City art collective in Baltimore and also organizes an annually sold-out DIY music festival as well as a massive 30-band tour. He even has his hands in the comedy world, just finishing up the 2nd annual Wham City Comedy tour covering experimental theater, performance art, video and stand-up. And he is environmentally conscious while on these tours, traveling in a school bus fueled by recycled vegetable oil.

Groove Korea had the chance to sit down with this up-and-coming artist before his performances in Busan (Jan 27th at Interplay) and Seoul (Jan 28th at Rolling Hall) and it is easy to understand why this is a must-see show.

Interview

Kathy Kearns: This is your first time in South Korea. Did you ever imagine you would play here?

Dan Deacon: No, it's sort of mind-blowing. I'm super excited.

Do you have any idea what to expect or know anything about Korean culture?

I know just about much as your average American, which is very little. I'm really looking forward to the food. I really love Korean food, so it will be insane to eat real Korean food in Korea.

Do you have any favorites?

I'm not sure if it's the same name, but bulgogi?

Yes, bulgogi is right. I think the Koreans will be very impressed to find out that you know that.

Oh my god, I'm so glad to hear that it's not just like an Americanized version of something.

For those readers who are not yet familiar with your work, what can they expect to see if they come to a Dan Deacon show?

Well, hopefully they'll see a lot of flailing bodies. I don't know how crowds will react in Korea, but for the most part there's a lot of dancing and audience participation. I try to involve the audience as much as possible. It's very loud with flashing lights. It's very different from a normal dance music show. It's definitely like ... there's an element of theater involved.

You are known for incorporating audience participation into your shows, but how exactly does that work?

Well I try to make a clearing, like a large circle in the center of the room and pick volunteers to run a dance contest or create human tunnels.

How did that start?

I think it came about sort of organically. The first time I did it was to bide time, because the power blew and it was a small basement club and I didn't want to lose the audience or lose the energy. So I said, "Make a circle in the center of the room!" And I started coming up with all of these weird, convoluted rules for the dancers to do. And then by the time the power came back on we had this insanely structured dance contest. It worked really well and it seemed to save the performance for me. So I was like, I have to keep doing this. This is the key to my success. So I started adding more and more stuff and whenever it seemed appropriate, just started going for it.

On your very first tour, you ended up traveling alone by bus, surviving on canned vegetables and sometimes playing for audiences of only few people. You've come a long way from there. How does it feel to be where you are now?

It's really surreal. I'm insanely grateful and humbled that people like my music and take the time to listen to it. The one thing I try to stay cognizant of is that I don't want to make music that is trying to appeal to something. The reason that people liked my music in the first place is because it was different sounding from other options that were out

His
WORDS

“I try to involve the audience as much as possible. It’s very loud with flashing lights.”

there, especially in the indie or underground scene. And I just want to keep doing that and not repeat myself and try to expand my palette of sound and timbres.

I want more mainstream people to get behind experimental music, so then they’ll start experimenting. Do you know what I mean? Because that’s how I feel that I got into it. I grew up in Long Island and it’s very monoculture and not experimentally minded. When I started getting exposed to experimental media and experimental culture, it blew my mind. I would hope to contribute to that to some other young weird suburban nerd.

The term DIY gets thrown around a lot when people talk about your work. Can you tell us more about what that means as it relates to music, for those who are not familiar with it?

I think it’s mainly for people who do as much as possible on their own or within their own core group without outsourcing. Like booking their own tours, making their own CD’s, silk-screening their own shirts, finding the venues and contacting the people who run the space. Normally they are house shows. A house venue would be considered a DIY venue, because they are putting on the venue without any funding. They don’t serve alcohol so it’s not like they are making any money.

And more and more bands are now doing that, correct?

Oh yeah, definitely. The key book in the U.S. that documents the rise of the new American underground is called “Our Band Could Be Your Life” (by Michael Azerrad). That book was really inspiring for me when I was on that first big U.S. tour where my van died and I was on a public bus and I thought, oh I should go home. Reading that book just gave me the willpower to keep going and the drive to stay on the tour. So I think that would be a good book if anyone is interested in finding out more about what it means to be DIY and its roots.

It’s certainly happening more now because it’s easier, which is great. Previously you had to try to get distribution and radio play to get people to hear your music, but obviously through the Internet that game has completely changed.

Tell me more about Wham City. What is it, how did it come about and what role did you play in it?

It’s an art collective based in Baltimore that several friends and I started in 2004. We moved to Baltimore and moved into a warehouse space and started having shows and putting on plays. Our first production was a DIY musical revue of Walt Disney’s “Beauty and the Beast.” You can see clips of it on YouTube. It’s kind of absurd.

But then it just started growing organically and more people started moving down that we knew from N.Y. And we started meeting people from Baltimore. And it just became this growing expansive collection of artists that make very different types of work in all different mediums. But the thing that keeps us together is that we’re all friends and we’ll work together or work individually. It’s like the X-Men (laughs).

What made you guys choose Baltimore, coming from N.Y.?

It was real cheap. That was the main thing. We were all broke and just got out of college and didn’t have any money. I wanted to live in a city, but didn’t want to live in N.Y. I felt like everyone moved to New York City or Brooklyn and I just didn’t want to do it. Baltimore is really centrally located on the East Coast so it’s easy to get to so many different cities. It’s great for a musician.

We moved into a huge 3,200-square-foot loft and my rent was like \$180/month so it was insanely affordable. And we could have huge shows and parties and practice whenever we wanted. It was a wild time. That’s why I think more and more smaller cities or peripheral cities or post-industrial collapsed cities are now these epicenters for culture, because it doesn’t get beaten down by rent so quickly. It has a chance to grow on its own. It’s like bacteria. You need somewhere dirty and grimy to grow bacteria.

Do you have any advice for people who are having trouble tapping into their creative sides?

Find people who are making stuff that you like who are at a similar level and try to link up with them, if they’re in your own city. Or if not, through the Internet. The Internet is a great way for people to link up with other musician and to make contacts. But if you live in a space, even if you live in a regular house, the house show is like the birth of community. And if you have a show in your house, you’re going to bring like-minded



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people into your house. Especially if you book an out of town act and you can go back and play their place.

What is the most off-the-wall creative project you’ve been involved with to date?

Probably the most surreal for me was the scoring the new film for Francis Ford Coppola. It’s called “Twixt.” It’s in post production now and will come out sometime in 2012. That was the most insane and surreal project I’ve worked on.

How did that come about?

He heard me doing an interview on NPR and invited me up to his estate and we started hanging out.

Any last words for Groove Korea readers?

I’ve got a bunch of days off in Korea, so I’m really looking forward to seeing the country and taking in as much of the city and the as possible. I know it’s going to be really cold, but I’m just really excited to go. I’ve got a friend who lives in Seoul so I think we’re going to have a good time.

Meet Seth Martin, folk musician

by CONOR O'REILLY
photos by BEN HAYNES



"The people I met and played with along the way survived by making their own decisions" --

Seth Martin

"Music is how people express, how they feel, and what better way to express this than to have music that is for something." --

Seth Martin

Allow me to introduce Seth Martin, a banjo and guitar-playing folk musician from Washington. Not the old-clothes-and-indescribable-music folk variety, he can technically be defined as contemporary.

Growing up the eldest of eight brothers and sisters in 700-people-strong Toledo, Washington, Martin's first musical experiment was in a Seattle-inspired grunge band during high school. Stronger influences soon diverted him from this long-haired and greasy path. Listening to Bob Dylan and John Denver led him to pick up the banjo. On hearing Neil Young, Martin's musical influence took a surer path.

When Martin first came to Korea in 2007 he was still in the early stages of musical growth. His music then was an anti-war, anti-commercialization rant against Bush era politics. The songs he wrote were those of an artist searching for a voice. There was never any doubt about his talent. One listen to his debut album, "The Iraqistan War and Other Stories," and you can hear the strength and variety in his music. The energy he brought to his album and live performances have left many intrigued and optimistic for his future.

In 2008, Martin left Korea and returned to the United States, where he recorded another album that he had worked on while in Korea. Over the next two and half years, Martin managed to tour around the United States six times; he played on collectivist porches, in church groups, in house parties, at anarchist gatherings, in coffee shops, always following the gigs. The experiences he had on the journey is central to his personal and musical philosophy today.

"The people I met and played with along the way survived by making their own decisions," he said. "And they care to hold a stake in their own communities."

"Music is how people express, how they feel, and what better way to express this than to have music that is for something," he said.

On a cool Saturday night in early November, at a small cultural exchange center in Bundang, Martin, dressed in a checked shirt, a cap over his long hair, he stood in front of a packed room of church-goers, public school students, expats and a Jeju naval base protestor, all sitting around a big communal table sharing fruit, muffins and a few bottles of booze. There were no microphones or amplifiers. Martin, with guitar in hand, led the room in a 20-minute sing-along with barely a break for air on his part. He was joined by a host of other performers, all improvising together, with Martin's contagious enthusiasm and energy acting as a coagulant.

"Much of my songs are geared for the community they are played in," said Martin. "My songs and audience change all the time."

This is his element.

"Without the usual technical apparatus you are freer to play, and people are encouraged to participate as there is no wall that microphones and speakers can often cause," he said. "There is no alienation, only openness and diversity, and that's how healthy relationships last."

For more on Martin's music and to download all his recorded albums, including his most recent album, "Seth Martin and the Menders," visit sethmartinandthemenders.bandcamp.com.

Seth Martin hosts a regular
pot-luck and folk evening every first
Saturday of the month in Culcom near
Seohyeon Station.

Contact Information:

Ben Hynes

haynes.benjamin@gmail.com
www.sethmartinandthemenders.bandcamp.com

Short Fiction's broken beats

Jonah Elliott, a.k.a. Short Fiction, has built a reputation for having a tasteful, eclectic and versatile angle on blending funky-ass, bass-infused beats and breaks. As such, he has played shows with the likes of The Dub Pistols' Barry Ashworth, Fort Knox Five's Jon H, Steve Porter, Lee Oombs, Krafty Kuts, DJ Shadow, Mat The Men, Phil K, Claude Von Stroke, Keith McKenzie, LTJ Bukem, Czech, Myagi and many other talented global electronic artists.

Although he has always had a penchant for booty shakin' broken beats, he has added filthy jackin' House and retro indie rock infused Electro to his armory. In short, he selects from many genres but always drops high-energy dance floor friendly music. Short Fiction always delivers a fast-paced set that is sure to set the floor on fire and get the crowd hyped.

INFO

This is a column dedicated to electronic music in Korea. Our aim is to give Groove Korea readers interviews and updates on what is happening on the peninsula. Feel free to contact the links below for information on clubs, DJs and events!

www.samurai.fm/seoulvibes | seoulvibes@gmail.com | www.myspace.com/seoulvibes



Interview with Jonah Elliott A.K.A. Short Fiction

What inspired you to spin records?

I have always had appreciation for good music from any genre. As such, my tastes in music are very broad. I had played the sax and sang in a band, but felt limited to some degree. The inspiration to spin records came from going to my first rave. On the main stage they were playing house and at another stage I heard a DJ drop the Prodigy remix of Method Man's "Release Yo Delf" along with some stuff off of the Ninja Tune label and a Beastie Boys track. At yet another stage I heard a DJ playing ragga jungle, cutting and scratching and dropping hip-hop and soul acapellas over the beats. I realized how much more I could do with records and turntables and I've never looked back.

Where was your first professional gig?

My first professional gig was called "Dubplate Pressure." It was a proper underground party in a warehouse in Kelowna, B.C., Canada.

What is your definition of DJ?

I am a very logical person. I think it is a bit silly that some people say that only turntablists are DJs. The Wikipedia definition suits me just fine. Essentially a person who selects and plays recorded music for an audience. Some DJs are just better than others.

What were your impressions of Korea when you first arrived?

Well, when I came to Korea for the first time in 2003, I stayed in Busan and I was very surprised to find that there were not many DJs. There was essentially only one club and there were no international shows being promoted in the city.

Who were the pioneers of the EDM scene in Busan?

The Korean pioneers would have to be DJs Pandol, Baeta, J, Dust and Baggy. Of the foreign DJs there is no doubt that Mr. Fudge, Jon Lockley, G and The Sundance Kid were the people responsible for starting the scene in Busan.

Why did you move to Seoul?

I worked really hard alongside Fudge, G, Baeta, Mechtech and Dust to make the scene grow in Busan for a number of years. We were the first to bring international DJs to the city. We did so completely on our own and without sponsorship. When the big nightclub bosses were saying, "Busan isn't ready yet," we were bringing artists from all over Korea and abroad. I basically just got tired and wanted to be in a place where the scene was already established so I could just focus on music again.

What is your worst/best experience behind the decks?

I was a die-hard vinyl enthusiast and was one of the last people to acquiesce to the fact that I would have to learn how to use CDJs. I was playing at a very large club and on my first mix, when the breakdown hit on my tune I ejected the wrong CD and the music stopped. Best is when I opened for Diesel Boy at Jisan Valley Rock Festival. About 20 minutes before he came on, the 3,000 capacity tent was completely rammed full of people and I dropped a very "angsty" big bass guitar tune called "Under Control" and the crowd went absolutely mad.

How would you compare the two cities with regards to nightlife?

Honestly, the biggest difference in my opinion is that in Busan, club-goers in general go out for the music. The people in the crowd go to a specific club at a specific time because they know what they want to hear. I found I could push the boundaries a lot more as a DJ there. I could drop a Sex Pistols tune in a breakbeat set, or play ragga jungle late at night and it would go over well. It seems to me that in Seoul the people in the crowd are just there to be in a cool place, to see and to be seen. Of course this is not the case at every club. But in general - it seems to be the case.

What changes in the scene need to be made for it to evolve?

I think essentially it's just going to take some time. There are a handful of smaller clubs in Hongdae, Gangnam and Itaewon that are staying true to the underground, doing interesting things and bringing great international talent. We just need more places like that and a few years and hopefully the scene here in Seoul will develop properly.

How do you motivate yourself after so many years behind the decks?

It's always been about the music for me. I really love music, period. I love playing it on a big sound system and having the freedom to play what I want, when I want to play it. Music is what has kept me motivated amid all of the drama, politics, gossip and backstabbing that goes along with DJ'ing and promoting here.

Who are your favorite DJs on the peninsula?

I really like DJ Yup, DJs Conan and Kuma, the Triple House gals, Eugene Blake, J Path, Udo Lee, SUHO, the East Collective crew, Greive and Oil Can Boyd to name a few.

What advice do you have for aspiring DJs and promoters?

Aspiring DJs, spend a couple of years playing at home before you play out, play what you like, but remember that ultimately it's the crowd that you need to please, not your mates. Promoters - do your homework. Don't try to do it on your own, work with a crew and always have a backup plan.

What can we expect from you this year?

This year I want to go back to my roots and mess around with different genres. I am creative director for a venue in Hanam-Dong called Club Six so I will be looking to build a solid foundation over there and focus a lot on music. Towards the end of the year I would like to have a couple of releases under my belt.

Do you have any regrets?

I regret parting ways with Mr. Fudge and not playing at his going away party. We sort of went different directions musically and at the time I was a bit jaded with all of the politics that go along with getting bookings here in Seoul and dropped out of the scene for a bit.

HER SPACE HOLIDAY, DAN DEACON HIGHLIGHT JANUARY

by NIGEL GILLIS

• Super Color Super is a collective of artists and musicians organizing concerts and helming creative initiatives. Bringing a variety of local and overseas talent together in Korea for the past two years, it has grown into an internationally-recognized indie booking agency, applauded for its efforts to put on concerts with lower ticket prices. Most recently, the collective organized a stunning show with Mogwai, which brought some 1,300 fans to Seoul's AX Hall.

HER SPACE HOLIDAY

Hailing from California, Indie-tronica veteran Marc Bianchi assumed the moniker Her Space Holiday in the mid-'90s, enchanting fans worldwide with his tech-laced, melancholy sound. After an active 15 years of studio releases and touring, the prolific Bianchi decided to finally hang up Her Space Holiday's moon boots and move on to greener pastures, announcing this to be his final tour with the dream-pop band after releasing his final, self-titled album in August.

Those lucky enough to catch one of his final shows will be partaking in indie history. Her Space Holiday's final tour reaches four cities across Korea, ambling through Cheonan, Busan, Seoul, and Daejeon in four days, a must-see for fans of The Postal Service, Wilco, The Notwist, Bright Eyes, or Magnetic Fields.

Jan 5 **Cheonan**
Dolce Bar - 10:00 p.m.

Jan 7 **Seoul**
Club FF 8:00 p.m.

Jan 6 **Busan**
Ol' 55 10:00 p.m.

Jan 8 **Daejeon**
Cantina 9:00 p.m.

DAN DEACON

Blasting in from Baltimore, feel-good-synth-wizard Dan Deacon forges his own genre out of '90s rave beats and jaunty cartoon-esque melodies. For live performances Deacon deserts the stage, choosing instead to plant himself in the center of his audience. He directs the festivities from a small desk covered in keyboards, distortion pedals, and rainbow bits of wire and electric tape, while overhead his iconic glowing green skull flashes to life as the show begins and sanity makes a departure.

Concertgoers are invited to participate in the ensuing chaos – or be left out of the fun, which features killer dance-offs and warped sing-alongs. If Deacon's mad genius doesn't warm your heart, his music will certainly get your feet moving. Recommended for fans of Girl Talk, Philip Glass, Lighting Bolt and Looney Tunes.

Jan 27 **Busan**
Vinyl Underground

Jan 28 **Seoul**
Rolling Hall

Tickets & INFO

TICKETS
KRW TBD

For tickets and more information about SCS, check out their webpage. Go to www.supercolorsuper.com

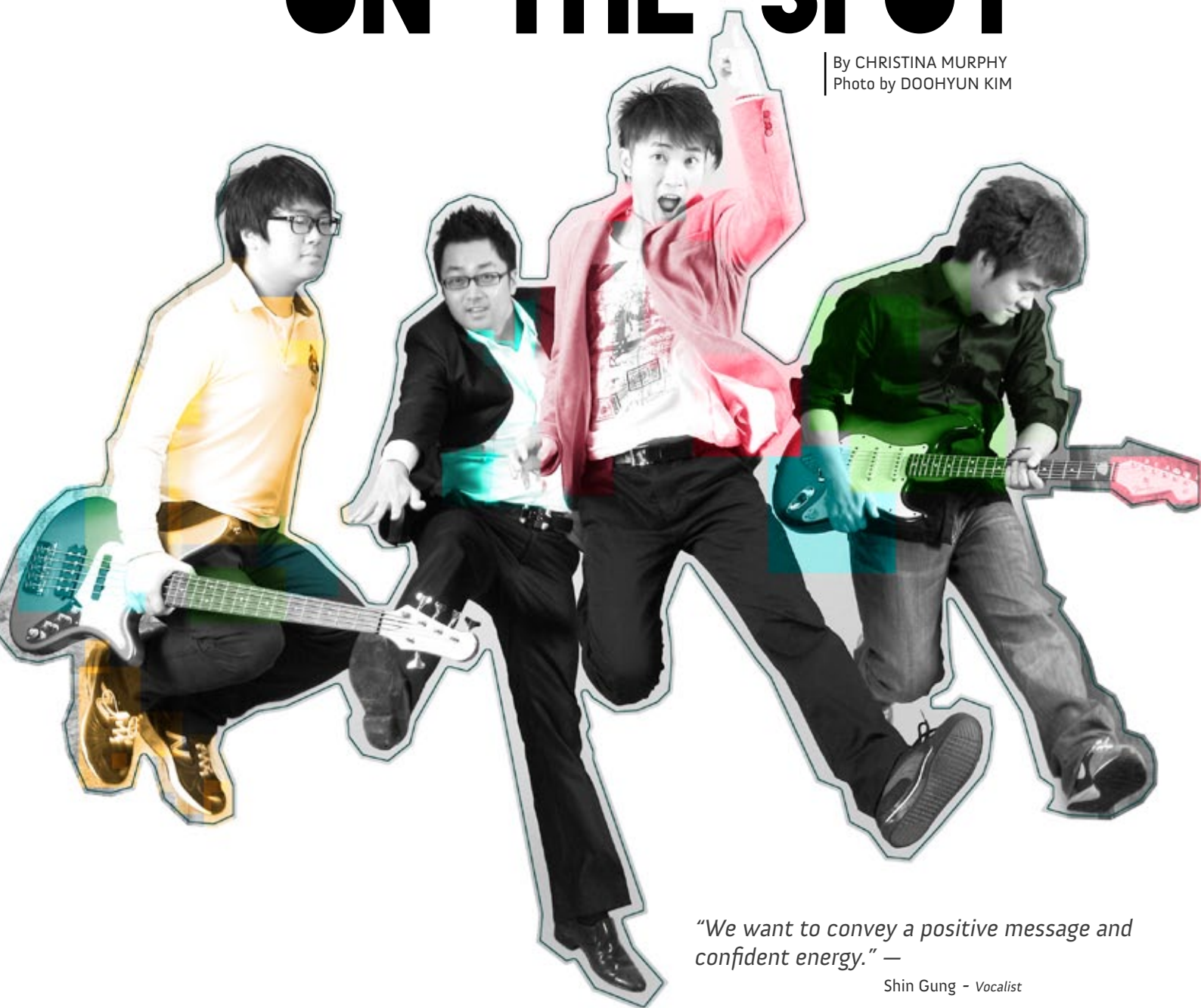
Those lucky enough to catch one of his final shows will be partaking in indie history. Her Space Holiday's final tour reaches four cities across Korea.

SuperColor Super brings Her Space Holiday and Dan Deacon to Seoul, Busan, Cheonan & Daejeon this month.

BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD FOR ON THE SPOT

GK

By CHRISTINA MURPHY
Photo by DOOHYUN KIM



"We want to convey a positive message and confident energy." —

Shin Gung - Vocalist

Although members of the band On the Spot have been together for less than a year, one would be wrong to consider them rookies. They have been active in Seoul's music scene for 10 years as soloists, session musicians and as vital parts of other acts. They've eased into their new roles and are currently recording their fourth new song. At the same time, they're composing and performing around Hongdae and on stage as the house band for the musical CASH, currently running in the National Theater of Korea.

The band is made up of Shin Gung (Seoul) on vocals and keyboard; Choi Sang-joon (Bucheon) on drums; Yang Man-hyug (Deajeon) on guitar; and Cho Pyung-jae (Daejeon) on bass.

"We are going to perform and record new songs continuously," said Shin Gung. "On the Spot hopes to be a band that makes popular melodies and unique sounds. We want to convey a positive message and confident energy."

The band's first three songs demonstrate an eclectic mix of rock and pop. Shin Gung's range of vocals is strong and evocative in their anthem, "So Cool," yet sugary and romantic in "Beautiful Woman." Their latest release, "Cigarette Girl" is slinky alternative rock with a softer melody. It's almost jazz, almost a ballad – who knows what their next song will inspire.

On stage they are fun and quirky and look like a band that has been together for a lot longer than a year. They are capable of throwing out adventurous covers from colorful characters like Mika, and the latest cult collaboration, Yu Jaesuk and Yi Jeok's Apgujeong Nalari.

The songs are positive and the concerts are fun. Indeed, the future is looking bright for this band.

On the Spot can be found at fine venues in Hongdae, as well as on Facebook.

GK

ARTS & CULTURE

For the latest on expat Art & Culture, go to
www.groovekorea.com

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Any of these exhibits would make a perfect Sunday diversion

Illustration by STEPHEN NICOL

What every new expat artist needs to know

I by: ELIZABETH ADELE GROESCHEN

"Fly your flag and carve your niche. You're most likely very far from home so you should feel free to engage in creative practices you always wanted to. Why not? You only live once."

1. Get involved.

"Most importantly, fly your flag and carve your niche. You're most likely very far from home so you should feel free to engage in creative practices you always wanted to. Why not? You only live once." – Dann Gaymer

2. Be diligent and learn to be demanding when purchasing materials.

"Always get things in writing, or terms that were agreed upon will be conveniently forgotten and ignored. You can be friendly with a business once you have a history together, but if you're too nice from the start, you will be taken advantage of almost every time." – Jason Mehl

→ For general art supply stuff
Homi Art (<http://homi.co.kr>)
357-1 Beon-ji Seogyo-dong,
Mapo-gu, Seoul

→ For photo developing & prints
Photopia (<http://photopia.co.kr>)
Chungmuro: Chungmuro 3-ga
24-8, Chung-gu, Seoul

→ For framing
Shin Art (recommended)
Yongsan-gu Hangang-Ro 1-ga 242 Beonji
Phone: (02) 795.0291

3. Patronize your expat-owned or expat-friendly art galleries & spaces.

• Laughing Tree Lab, Noksapyeong • Project Space Gallery Golmok, Itaewon
• Jay Gallery, Insadong.

4. Join the IAC.

For more information on the International Artists Community, go to <http://koreaiac.com>. – Richard Beaumont

5. Learn the language.

"This is something that is essential to talk with gallery owners, print shops, framing shops, so I would recommend learning it to the level of at least basic conversation." – Martyn Thompson

6. Attend Artist Talks.

Go to the Artsonje Center (<http://artsonje.org/eng>).

7. Check out artist resource websites online.

"www.artinasia.com and www.artday.co.kr are both excellent resources." – Adam Lofbomm

8. Learn artist business tips.

If there aren't classes to attend or people to talk to, start here: www.artbizblog.com.

9. Dive even deeper into the business side of art.

Go to www.asmp.org (American Society of Media Photographers). Their free webinar series is not only geared towards photographers, but it also provides great downloadable lectures on copyright, licensing, and the future of art and commerce.

12. Support <http://www.aweh.tv>

Read it. Link it. Love it.

13. Sell your art at art fairs and flea markets.

"Try Platoon Kunsthalte Night Flea Market, Gallery Golmok Art Bazaar and Hongdae Free Market to start!" – Andy St. Louis

- Whether you're fresh off the boat or an expat vet, the following list of advice may be of some use to you.

We've talked to some established foreign artists in Korea, asking them to share what they've learned over the years. Their advice includes where to find art supplies, establishing a professional network, motivating yourself, meeting new people and getting business cards made. This list might save you cash, time and maybe even your sanity.

"Learning the language is something that is essential to talk with gallery owners, print shops, framing shops, so I would recommend learning it to the level of at least basic conversation." -

— Martyn Thompson



11. Submit your work to websites and blogs that feature emerging artists.

www.mymodernmet.com
www.thisiscolossal.com
www.artistaday.com
www.hifructose.com
www.todayandtomorrow.net
www.booooooom.com

10. Submit your work everywhere.

"Except the Goyang International Art Fair. The way our art work is treated in group shows is quite shameful. The 'international' artists work was poorly hung (some not at all), no name tags were displayed, just thrown on a table and our work was treated disrespectfully." – Martyn Thompson

15. Get business cards made.

Even if they only have your name and e-mail address on them. www.rockcard1004.com is cheap and easy if you can read Korean.

14. Give your art away.

"Find folks who already have a good collection, and who entertain in their homes, and then get your work on their walls, even if it isn't paid for. This contribution to the beautification of mankind is more likely to find collectors than a show at a pay-for-play commercial gallery (in Korea)." – Doug Stuber

17. Make your own stickers.

Kindly leave a few (or several) at your local watering holes, burger joints, or next to your favorite street art in Seoul.

18. Establish a studio.

And make it near other art studios if at all possible.

16. Make a catalogue of your work.

Don't leave home without it.

19. Visit alternative art/bookstores for inspiration.

"The Book Society and Your Mind (both near Hongdae) are excellent places to start. Visit Nam June Paik Art Center, the National Museum of Korea, and Samsung Leeum Museum at least once." – Andy St. Louis

20. Tell people you are an artist.

"Always tell people I'm an artist instead of I'm an English Teacher, but I do art on the side." – Andy St. Louis

At the Box Office

| by DEAN CRAWFORD

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo



The New Year is upon us which means that awards season is in its final stages. And one film yet to be released that has been tipped for some form of Oscar glory is David Fincher's adaptation of Stieg Larsson's best-selling novel "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo".

The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo follows disgraced financial Journalist Mikael Blomkvist (Daniel Craig) and his aide Lisbeth Salander (Rooney Mara), who at the behest of Henrik Vanger (Christopher Plummer), attempt to search for his niece who has been missing for over 40 years as he believes his corrupt family has something to do with it.

The announcement that Hollywood had chosen to make this film despite the Swedish Original being so successful, having to date grossed over \$200,000,000 dollars worldwide, may have come as a shock to some people as the general consensus was that it would be quite difficult to top a film that is already very good. But the fact that the Swedish film only made \$10,000,000 at the U.S box office, yet the book had been read by millions, suggested there was room to cash in on an English language version, much to the disapproval of Niels Arden Oplev, director of the Swedish adaptation, who mused "Why would they remake something when they can just go see the original?" Everybody who loves film will go see the original one." What he fails to understand is that the film is not a remake of his movie, but more a reimagining, as Fincher's version was scripted by Oscar-winner Steve Zaillian of "Schindler's List" fame who has insisted that he has never seen the original film and his screenplay is based solely on Steig Larsson's novel.

I usually abhor remakes of foreign language films, seeing them as nothing more than ways for Hollywood to cash in on the loyal cinema going public, especially when if the original is a great film. Oplev's original was dark, gritty and a great, suspenseful modern day film noir. Noomi Rapace's performance as the haunted Lisbeth was so good people campaigned for her to get an Oscar nomination. So, much like Spike Lee's reimagining of Oldboy, I just didn't see a need for the film to be made.

That was until I saw the first pulsating, energetic and downright cool trailer which featured Trent Reznor and Karen O's cover of Led Zeppelin's Immigrant Song, which suggested, with all bias aside, Fincher's version could actually surpass the original. But as we all know, a great trailer doesn't make a great film. Regardless, people are talking up Fincher's Oscar hopes and the fact that it is a remake doesn't mean it will hurt his chances, just look at Martin Scorsese with "The Departed." But what does the man himself have to say when pressed about his films Oscar potential? "There's too much anal rape in this movie, I think we're safe". However, I remember him writing off his previous effort which happened to be a small film called "The Social Network," which went on to receive 8 nominations. So if it's anywhere near as good as that, I'll be very happy.

We Bought A Zoo

Little girl to father: "Why don't you tell stories anymore?"
Father to Little Girl: "Because we are living the story"

If given the choice, I would usually stay well clear of a film that had this kind of cringe worthy dialogue unless, however, the film was directed by Cameron Crowe of Almost "Famous" and "Jerry Maguire" fame and starred Matt Damon. Low and behold, this is the case as the two have come together for the comedy/drama "We Bought a Zoo" from 20th Century Fox.

"We Bought a Zoo" is the story of Benjamin Mee (Damon), a devoted father and husband who, during a turbulent time for his family due to the death of his wife, decides to relocate his family. Consisting of 14-year-old Dylan (Colin Ford) and five-year-old Rosie (Maggie Elizabeth Jones), Benjamin buys a run-down Zoo in Southern California but soon realizes he may well have bitten off more than he can chew as not only must he take care of his disjointed family, but 200 animals, rising debts and his new staff of zoo keepers, including Kelly (Scarlet Johansson). Benjamin is not deterred and is determined to succeed in his new life and to rescue his family.

While this might sound like a story dreamed up by Hollywood, the film is actually based on real life. "We Bought a Zoo" is a book by British Journalist Benjamin Mee who documented his family's decision to purchase Dartmoor Zoo in Devon back in 2006. But unlike the movie, it was the death of his father and his mother's desire to move which prompted the purchase. It wasn't until 3 months after moving into the zoo that his wife, Katherine, unfortunately passed away and the enormity of the task began to hit home. The real Benjamin wrote in the Guardian back in 2007 "as the grim living conditions, bad weather and lack of money came home to roost fending off creditors became a full-time job." Not very glamorous at all, but it seems that Crowe has managed to produce a feel good movie without compromising his indie style. What more would you expect from a director that has been called the "great heart of American cinema".

Despite Crowe's five-year absence after the commercial and critical failure of "Elizabethtown" he is still considered one of the best directors in the business with "Almost Famous" heralded as a classic in some quarters. "Say Anything" has certainly stood the test of time and I more than enjoyed "Jerry Maguire" and "Vanilla Sky" (as you may have read last month, I have a thing for Tom Cruise!). And with Matt Damon as the leading man, this is certainly a recipe for success. It's hard to judge if "We Bought a Zoo" will simply try to tug at your heartstrings and actually work as a drama in its own right, but given Crowe's body of work thus far, I'd recommend buying a ticket to find out.



Korean DVD Corner

| by DANIEL JOSEPH VORDERSTRASSE

Blind

Tragedy strikes when prized police academy cadet Min Soo-ah (Kim Ha-neul) intervenes in her younger brother's mischievous B-Boy lifestyle, seeking to rescue him from destroying his potential, but a fateful traffic accident results in his death, leaving her emotionally distraught and permanently blind. Seeking reinstatement to the police force as a criminal analyst, her superior denies her because she neglected authority hastily using restraints, which we're told ultimately caused her brother's passing. But fate intervenes when she returns to the city and a taxi driver commits a hit-and-run. The driver moonlights as a psychotic killer (Yang Young-jo), abducting women and sexually ravishing them, concluding in slaughter. Soo-ah describes the preceding encounter, but law enforcement is hardly intrigued to accept a handicapped, frail female's testimony. After proving competent, Soo-ah attains Detective Jo's (Jo Hie-bong) trust and respect and is injected into the investigation.

Following her analysis and a delivery boy's (Yoo Seung-ho) eyewitness account, police hone in on the perpetrator leading to a competition of sensory and wits between good and evil culminating in a chase to the death to maintain a sexual deviant's miscreant exploits.

Simply put, this is another bland, run-of-the-mill suspense/thriller with a minor twist hoping to justify its existence. The first hour sets the scene developing the characters involved in the climax. While containing a hint of suspense whilst simultaneously lacking any demonstration of quality, no surprises or fascination are involved. Better selections are certainly available for rental or justify hard drive occupation.

Entertainment is the only aspect provided as another deranged serial killer preys on a harmless female ... blah,blah,blah – you've seen one, you've seen them all; unfortunately you'll see them again because movies are made for profit and this genre tweaks three-and-a-half plot details, eventually releasing another uninspiring adaptation.



The Front Line



Aerok Hill, a mortar-riddled mound, rests as a pivotal landmark in ceasefire talks between North and South Korea during the concluding stages of Korean War combat. Neither side will relinquish their quest to control the hill for location of the pending demarcation line, blindly sacrificing teenage troops for strategic greed.

Mysterious circumstances enthrall the South commander's death, combined with communist correspondence intercepted via post, relocating Lieutenant Kang Eun-pyo (Shin Ha-kyun) to the eastern front as an investigations officer charged with discovering the unit's mole. Upon arrival, Eun-pyo discovers that old friend Kim Su-hyeok (Ko Soo) – previously believed to be MIA behind enemy lines – had ascended to be Alligator Company's inspirational leader.

After countless clashes, the unit is in shambles; it's leaderless, the men are wearing enemy uniforms to maintain warmth, and they provide for orphans while encamped. As acting commander of the unit, Shin Il-young (Lee Je-hoon) is a 20-year-old renegade continuously thrusting himself into harm's way to fight for a simple plot of land bequest by central command. Eun-pyo must balance his preceding internal affairs reputation to expose the conspirator while surviving war's horrific circumstances and re-establishing relationships with his former compatriot, Su-hyeok.

First and foremost, this is a war movie, so the tragic portrayal of war's atrocious events are well represented. Although not overly graphic, certain tolerances for these occurrences are required.

Korean films depicting brotherly quarrels are frequent in Korean cinema, as several features seem to be produced yearly, but this episode illustrates war's psychological effects and how it transforms the common soldier. Moments of battle occur during the duration, but a psychologically driven war drama, not a war epic, should be expected. A thrilling finale culminates the climactic action bringing a conclusion to constant struggles experienced by citizens turned combatants.

20 expat
EXHIBITS
for JanuaryAre you exhibiting your work? Let us know!
E-mail mattlamers@groovekorea.com

1

Artist Name:
Gunther von Hagen
Exhibition name:
Body Worlds
Running Dates:
Ongoing
Location:
The War Memorial of Korea, Yongsan-gu, Seoul, (Samgakji station, exit 12)
Medium:
Anatomical exhibition; the life cycle

2

Artist Name:
Josef Schulz
Exhibition name:
The Glory of Nature
Running Dates:
November 18 – January 8
Location:
Gallery Lumiere, Jongno-gu, Seoul (Gwanghwamun station (line 5, exit 7),
Medium:
Paintings, photography

3

Artist Name:
Yoon Kwan-hyun, Kang Hyun-joo, Kim, Hyun-joo, Park Jong-young
Exhibition name:
ARTanotocus
Running Dates:
December 5 – January 12
Location:
Gallery AG, Yeongdeungpo-gu
Medium:
Paintings and installation

4

Artist Name:
Leslie de Chavez
Exhibition name:
God is Busy
Running Dates:
November 15 – January 15
Location:
Arario Gallery Cheonan, Chungcheong-nam-do, Cheonan-si, near Shinsegae
Medium:
Paintings, sculpture, installation

5

Artist Name:
Mina Cheon
Exhibition name:
Polipop, Political Pop Art
Running Dates:
January 13 – March 11
Location:
Sungkok Art Museum, Jongno-gu, Seoul (Gwanghwamun station (line 5, exit 7)
Medium:
Media, video, installation, performance

6

Artist Name:
JimmySK
Exhibition name:
The Three Ladies
Running Dates:
Jan. 22; jimmysk83.wordpress.com
Location:
Laughing Tree Studio, Haebangchon, Yongsan-gu, Seoul
Medium:
Illustration, stencil, and screen printing

7

Artist Name:
Beanie Kaman, Christopher Kramer, Joel Bewley, Joel King, Martyn Thompson
Exhibition name:
Warm Painting Group Exhibition
Running Dates:
December 23 – January 25
Location:
Gallery Golmok, Yongsan-gu
Medium:
Painting, photos, sculpture, installation

8

Artist Name:
Korean/Chinese calligraphers
Exhibition name:
1300th Anniversary of Saeng Kim's Birth
Running Dates:
December 24 – March 4
Location:
Seoul Calligraphy Art Museum, Seoul Arts Center, Seocho-gu
Medium:
Calligraphy

9

Artist Name:
Yann Arthus Bertrand
Exhibition name:
It's My Home
Running Dates:
December 15 – March 15
Location:
Seoul Museum of Art (SeMA), Jongno-gu, Seoul (City Hall Station, exit 1
Medium:
Media art, photography, video images

10

Artist Name:
Zadok Ben-David
Exhibition name:
Blackfield
Running Dates:
December 2 – February 10
Location:
Artclub1563, Seocho-gu, Seoul (Seocho Station (line 2, exit 2)
Medium:
Installation

11

Artist Name:
11 artists
Exhibition name:
Aha! Moment
Running Dates:
January 1 – February 15
Location:
Hangaram Art Museum, Seoul Arts Center, Seocho-gu, Seoul
Medium:
Painting, photo, sculpture, installation

12

Artist Name:
Jose Antonio Nigro, John Breitfuss, Martyn Thompson, Soo Gu-hee
Exhibition name:
homo-sapiens
Running Dates:
January 27 – February 15
Location:
Gallery Golmok, Yongsan-gu
Medium:
Photos, sculpture, installation, paintings

13

Artist Name:
Various
Exhibition name:
Where's My Friends' Home?
Running Dates:
November 26 – February 19
Location:
Nam Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul Museum of Art, Sadang Station, exit 1
Medium:
Western/Korean paintings, photos

14

Artist Name:
Thomas Demand
Exhibition name:
N/A
Running Dates:
November 24 – January 10
Location:
PKM Trinity Gallery, Apgujeong-ro (Across from Galleria Department Store)
Medium:
Installation

15

Artist Name:
Group Exhibition
Exhibition name:
City Within the City
Running Dates:
November 12 – January 15
Location:
Art Sonje Center, Jongno-gu, Seoul, near Gyeongbokgung Palace and gallery road
Medium:
Video, installation, photography

16

Artist Name:
Joris Laarman
Exhibition name:
N/A
Running Dates:
December 13 – January 20
Location:
Kukje Gallery, Samcheong-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul (across from Gyeongbokgung)
Medium:
Metalworks, installation

17

Artist Name:
Group Exhibition
Exhibition name:
TV Commune
Running Dates:
September 29 – January 24
Location:
Nam June Paik Art Center, Yongsin-si, near Korean Folk Village
Medium:
Various

18

Artist Name:
Various
Exhibition name:
The Court Painter of Joseon Dynasty
Running Dates:
October 13 – January 29
Location:
Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Hanam-dong, Seoul (Hangangjin station)
Medium:
Paintings

19

Artist Name:
Various
Exhibition name:
Australian and Korean art 1976-2011
Running Dates:
November 10 – February 19
Location:
National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea, Gwacheon-si (Seoul Grand Park)
Medium:
Various

20

Artist Name:
Karl Lagerfeld
Exhibition name:
Work in Progress
Running Dates:
October 13 – March 18
Location:
Daelim Contemporary Art Museum, Jongno-gu, (Gyeongbokgung Station)
Medium:
Photography

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10 NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS YOU WON'T KEEP..... 65

Tongue-in-cheek take on some top new year resolution fails

ROCK'EM SOCK'EM ROLLER DERBY..... 66

Roller derby combines fierceness, femininity and punk rock aesthetic



Illustration by: DANIELA VARGAS
Digital Artist & Illustrator (Costa Rica)
dvq_90_7@hotmail.com

COMMUNITY • www.groovekorea.com



10 NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS YOU WON'T KEEP

A tongue-in-cheek take on some new year resolutions we bet more than a few of us have attempted!

by TYRON BUTLER



No. 1 → Quit Smoking

What's this – the third year you've decided to quit? The fourth? Time to stop disappointing yourself. You realize these cancer sticks are slowly killing you, but you need a release dammit! How else are you supposed to wind down after a day of getting pushed around by ajummas, screaming kids, and neck-breaking stop/start bus rides? "Where the hell did these guys learn to drive?" you think. Relax. Light another. The stress dissipates like smoke out of your nostrils. Don't sweat it – they're only 2,500 won a pack.

No. 2 → Save Money

A responsible goal, but with your (insert travel/drinking/shopping) habits do you really think that's possible? Up until now, would people have described you as "fiscally conservative?" What's going to change? Are you up for a massive pay rise in 2012? Not likely. You're in Korea, baby! It's time to keep up with the Kims, not fall behind with the Joneses. Book that three-day whirlwind tour of Europe. Buy that Hermes handbag/manbag. Buy a round of Cass at the bar. You got money to burn and you're in the right place to do it!

No. 3 → Reduce the Booze

Notice "reduce," not "quit." Right there your concession exposes you for the boozehound you are. But, "once it hits my lips, it's so good!" you say. I know. I've been there. And I've got to say, if there's one place to get your drink on, it's Korea. Take heart. There is a technicality that may enable you to achieve this goal after all. Weren't you consuming, on average, six standard drinks, six days a week last year? Well, what's one less shot of soju this year? A reduction! Congratulations, you're not the alcoholic that you say you're not.

No. 4 → Learn Korean

I recently saw this on Facebook:

Foreigner: I'm having a Burger Bash!

Korean: 언제?

Foreigner: What does that mean?

Korean: How long have you been in the ROK?

Foreigner: 8 years.

It gets worse when eventually you move back home and the conversation inevitably runs along the lines of "So how long did you live in Korea?" "9 years."

"So you speak Korean fluently then?" "Nope." You know you should learn the language, but the question is, will you? The answer for most is "no." The fact is you secretly love not comprehending any of what is being said around you, or to you. There's something beautiful about being yelled at by a scowling ajumma and knowing she's upset, but not giving a rats ass and politely smiling back, infuriating her further. Sometimes it's pure bliss. Are you really going to give that up?

No. 5 → Go to the Gym

Look at your gut. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. No, your clothes didn't shrink in the wash. Pretty soon that Air Supply t-shirt you said you'd never throw out will be a mid-riff. Didn't you promise to rid yourself of this wobbly piece of lard three years ago? It wasn't too bad back then, either. Now it's grown to be your prominent feature. Not only that, but your ass has grown, you're weak, and the thought of walking up the steps of a subway station only makes you dream of foot-longs. Going to the gym's never going to happen. Besides, all the fit people that go there are wankers, right?

No. 6 → Lose Weight

When you went home the first time your mum said you looked "healthy." When you went back the second time she said something about a "full figure." She was strangely silent about your appearance this last visit. Your waist is ever-expanding, and the sooner you come to realize that the sooner you can go out and buy some pants that fit your fat ass. Skinny jeans are no longer an option for you, and it's time you accept that. There are comfortable moo moos on sale at Namdae-mun. Just 10,000 won.

No. 7 → Eat Better

Let's face it, every time you pass by KFC you hear that Tower Burger calling your name. You don't have the willpower to resist it. And what about the lunchtime McValue set? At that price it would be a crime not to buy one. The corn on your pizza constitutes your largest weekly vegetable intake. You've been living on donkas and ramen for the last six years.

No. 8 → Have More Sex

You think you're great in bed. The fact is you're not. You think "wham, bam, thank you ma'am" is the best way to put "runs on the board." It's not. You don't have moves like Jagger. Romance is not dead, but your sex life will be if you don't learn the basics. Technique. Tenderness. Timing. But let's face it: You've been bumbling your way through one drunken sexual encounter a year since you lost your virginity in '98. You can barely remember what breasts look like in person. Maybe you'll get lucky with a double-header this year, but the odds are against it.

No. 9 → Read Books

You go to What The Book and buy a New York Times bestselling novel, determined to be one of "those" people. It's an admirable goal. You'll probably learn something, and be able to chime in around the water cooler with your more learned friends. But as you get comfortable on your orange pleather couch, the phone rings. "I'll meet you at the bar in five." Two weeks later you're taking the long trip out to Bundang on the subway. You're prepared, and have your new Kindle Touch. You settle down and turn it on only to start feeling a little sleepy. Your head grows heavy. You find a shoulder. And so goes your year of reading.

No. 10 → Become More Cultured

The mud festival's a cultural thing, isn't it? Yeah, right. You tried this before, remember? When you were dragged out to Icheon by your ex-girlfriend to watch the thrilling art of pottery-making? Or when your Korean dentist took you to a riveting a capella performance in Gwangwhamun. Those "artsy" things didn't impress you then and they sure as hell won't impress you now. Don't pretend. It's like nodding when the hipster at work asks you if you've heard the new Black Keys album, knowing damn well you haven't heard a new album since the "City of Angels" soundtrack.



GK

Rock'em sock'em roller derby

by JENNY NA

• Inspired by a growing global movement that is rocking women's sport, Korea's first roller derby league is close to its first bout. Combining fierceness, femininity and a punk rock aesthetic, roller derby embraces hard-hitting action and plenty of saucy attitude for what could be the baddest brawl this side of the DMZ.

For people new to the game, it's the flashy costumes and flamboyant names (not to men-

tion the prospect of a slugfest) that attract the most attention.

With names like Minnie Mo' Comin', Glamzilla and Fury Cat, and attitudes to match, Republic of Korea Derby's skaters range in experience from veteran to novice, with some on skates for the first time.

The flashy names and violence are there for your entertainment, to be sure, but make no

mistake: This is a serious sport that requires as much skill and athleticism as it does a flair for the dramatic. The message in the movement is that a woman can be strong and assertive without losing her feminine identity.

Combining fierceness, femininity and a punk rock aesthetic, roller derby embraces hard-hitting action and plenty of saucy attitude.

Photo by DEREK P. OPDYKE



"I once took a hit so hard that it threw me 10 feet backward and then I rolled another 10 feet into the opposite team's bench. I was literally flying through the air."

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The Korean league was started by four women, including Jody O'Neill, who moved here in March from Detroit, where she was a founding member of the Detroit Derby Girls.

"It was real campy when it started," O'Neill said of derby's early days. "As time's gone on it's gotten more serious, and now it's really a sport. But the derby names, the rock and roll aspect have stayed. There's still a good sense of humor behind it."

When it started in the 1920s, roller derby was a coed endurance race, but things changed when it became clear that the collisions were the main draw. Then came the theatrics, the costumes and the derby names. At one point it was even like pro wrestling, with all the hijinks and fake plays that that sport entails. But in the 1970s the flame went out and it looked like roller derby was dead.

More than 30 years later, it resurfaced in

Austin as a women's sport, run by and for women, with a decidedly grassroots appeal. Since then, more than 1,000 leagues have sprung up worldwide, including in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Japan. As a sign of just how far the sport has come, the first Roller Derby World Cup was held last month with 13 teams from around the world.

It looks like the sport is at the beginning of a meteoric rise.

It may be a while before the Korean league gets to an internationally competitive level, but these women hope to play the first bout in the coming months.

The league had its first practice last April and attracted 12 women before posting its first ad. It now has about 30 members from all over the country.

"It took my league about a year to get going," O'Neill said of the Detroit Derby Girls. "I

think we're looking at about a year from the start to when we finally play here, too, and hopefully we can play by spring."

Given the transient nature of the expat community, the league will most likely be a rec league for now.

"We'll come up with some team names and then we'll have to divide the teams by skill levels because we'll always have girls coming in and out," O'Neill said.

On the track, the bouts are fast-paced, full-contact affairs. Two teams of five players, one jammer and four blockers, move counterclockwise around the track in a 2-minute jam. During that time, the jammer gets a point for each skater she passes as the blockers do their best to get in her way. Players can block each other by hitting above the hip — but there are penalties for using the elbows, hands or head.

As a founding member of the Women's Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA), which sets rules and rankings for its 130 member leagues worldwide, O'Neill is familiar with the rules because she helped devise them.

"We had two pages of rules when we were first starting, just the basics," she said. "A couple of leagues had a penalty wheel. The girls would spin it if they got a penalty and it was like spank alley where they had to skate in front of the audience and get hit."

"In Detroit we were like, if somebody hits me I'm gonna hit 'em back." These days, the rules are very specific, dictating how far apart the pack can be spread out and where and how to deliver a hit.

Because WFTDA requires member leagues to own and operate a majority of the league's business, the Korean league hasn't yet joined the organization.

To join, volunteer or contribute to the league, visit rokderbyblog.tumblr.com.

Photo by DEREK P. OPDYKE



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In the meantime, the skaters are working to raise money, build relationships within the community and spread the word. Before they play their first game, they'll need equipment and sponsorship. They'll also need referees, a role that can be played by either by men or women. And they're always on the lookout for new members.

The skaters practice every weekend, alternating between Seoul and Daegu.

Off the track, the group is a diverse one, with women coming from backgrounds in linguistics, social work and education. On the track, the names and personas they develop allow them to express another side of their personalities, whether it be toughness or tongue-in-cheek humor.

"One of the most fun parts of derby is thinking of a name, an alter ego," said Monique Dean, who skates as Minnie Mo' Comin' and holds a degree in social work. She skated at birthday parties as a kid but made the leap to roller derby after watching a documentary about the first league in Austin.

"From that point on I knew I wanted to do it but I didn't think I could," she said. "Then when I came to Korea and saw that a friend of mine had joined the league. I said, 'I'm definitely going to do it.' Why not?"

No stranger to risk, Dean came to Korea looking for something different.

"Sometimes it's worth taking a risk like that, just going and seeing what happens," she said. "It can be exhausting sometimes, but it's worth it." Erica Neier, whose skate name is Glamzilla, joined in September.

"When I came here, I was looking for something more to do and when I saw the posting on Facebook I was like, 'My time has come.'"

As a young woman, she was athletic but had never skated.

"I was that girl who was always falling at the roller rink, so after seventh grade I never did it," she said.

These days, falling is a necessary survival skill.

By now, the derby injuries are almost as famous as the sport itself and many roller girls wear their injuries with pride.

"I once took a hit so hard that it threw me 10 feet backward and then I rolled another 10 feet into the opposite team's bench. I was literally flying through the air," said O'Neill, whose skate name is, appropriately, Crash. "Then I stood up and I was like, was that legal? And my teammates were like, yeah, it's legal. So I went back out and I was black and blue for a month." In five years of playing roller derby, she said she'd broken her hand and her leg and torn the meniscus in her knee.

"But it's a fun sport to play. And all of my injuries have been during practice," she said. "There's kind of a joke with a lot of the skaters. You do all of these incredibly brutal things on the track and then you trip and fall going over a bump on the sidewalk and break your leg."

There haven't been any serious injuries in the Korean league.

At a practice in Seoul in November, Dean tumbled backward, hit her head and had to sit out for a few minutes. But she got right back up, which is what she'll have to do when the bouts start.

So how do you protect yourself?

"You've just got to take care of your body and do everything properly," Neier said. "We do a lot of competitive knee drills and falling drills and then falling becomes second nature." Everyone wears helmets and knee and elbow padding, with some adding padded shorts and hip protectors to the kit. "It has to be really heavy duty because we're literally taking each other out," O'Neill said.

The group ranges in age from 25-35, reflecting the demographics of the expat population in Korea, but roller derby isn't limited to that particular age bracket. "It's something anyone can do if they really want to; there's no limitations as far as age," Dean said.

Leagues in the U.S. have skaters in their late 30s and 40s, some who started with no experience.

"My league in Detroit has several people who are in their mid-40s 'cause they joined when they were almost 40," O'Neill said. "Summer's Evil from my league, she's like 43 or 44. She was almost 40 when she started."

The group's sole Korean national is Kim Yoo-rim, a.k.a. Fury Cat, who joined in August and said she got into it for the rigorous training that has consistently drawn women who don't fit in to traditional athletics or may not otherwise have been interested in sport. Since then, her connection to roller derby has evolved.

"I wasn't interested at first, but now it's the most important thing in my life," she said. "It gives my life balance."

As a new skater, she said she has had plenty of support from her teammates and doesn't feel rushed to learn new skills. "Everyone encourages me," she said. "I really like it because it's truly a team sport."

In the future, the league would like to add more Korean nationals to its roster. It has already built a strong relationship with its practice rink in Daegu, where, "the rink owners love us," O'Neil said.

"I really hope that as we get things translated and get the word out there that we'll get more Korean members," she said. "I'd actually love to see our league taken over by Koreans or see Koreans start their own league. People have asked me what I would do if Koreans started their own league and excluded us, because that happens sometimes, and, well, that's fine. That means roller derby's here for good."

GK

Photo by DEREK P. OPDYKE

INFORMATION

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Elegance in the Elephant Kingdom

| Photos & story by FLASH PARKER

"The boom of a great horn shakes me from my daydream as a cargo ship slowly overtakes us, so overloaded with bananas that I wonder if the fruit is what keeps the boat afloat."



• LAOS – Little languid landlocked Laos. Surrounded on all sides by bigger, bolder neighbors Thailand, China, Vietnam and Cambodia, Laos is all too often left off South East Asian travel itineraries; vanguards of the sun flock to Phuket and Nha Trang; culture vultures spend their days exploring Chiang Mai and contemplating history at Angkor; hipsters head for Yangshuo and wax poetic in the cafes of Kunming. In passing you may hear of travelers of a certain breed flocking to Vang Vieng, where the Mekong runs quick and dirty, transforming the sleepy backwater into the spring break capital of Asia, unwittingly turning their back on the rest of Laos – the other Laos – a destination that offers sophisticated, adventurous visitors an enchanting escape into South East Asia's most elegant country.

Laos is no longer the exclusive domain of the renegade backpacker; today the country is well suited to serving the needs of upmarket visitors and enthralling the intrepid discoverer: cruising the mighty Mekong, canvassing ancient temples like a colonial surveyor, shopping for locally handmade textiles in haggard markets or exploring the deepest recesses of the ancient jungle makes it easy to act like a tourist without feeling like one. And in case you didn't know, Laos is a fine place for pachyderms.

An Elephant at the River's Edge

When traveling in Northern Thailand I overheard a wayfaring-stranger refer to a journey down the Mekong River by slow boat as his Great Asian Pilgrimage: at that moment I knew it was a trip I must make. Now, staring out my window at the verdant endlessness from the deck of the slow boat somewhere between Huay Xai (a heavily-trafficked border crossing between Laos and Thailand) and the backwater charmer Pak Beng, I wonder why I had counted Laos out until now.

Sure, my seat is little more than a giant sack of rice and my big bottle of Beer Lao is and always has been warm, but here, in the belly of this nautical behemoth I'm swiftly introduced to the Asia I only ever created in my imagination. Craggy karst mountains on either side of the river threaten to crumble and

crash back to earth; the murky waters of the river beg the traveler to ascribe some meaning to their mysterious depths; bamboo domiciles and thatched huts act as silent sentinels, each with a rugged canoe ready to ferry the protectors of the river to battle.

The boom of a great horn shakes me from my daydream as a cargo ship slowly overtakes us, so overloaded with bananas that I wonder if the fruit is what keeps the boat afloat. I am distracted from these scenes only by my desire to witness an elephant come crashing through the underbrush, wade into the water and tow our ship downriver.

Departing from Huay Xai I decided against other water transit options, including the luxury cruiser, opting for the plebian slow boat so that I might get a look at life

along the river. I quickly lose count at how many times we stop along the way: we make room for families moving wholesale from one village to the next, old men in tribal garb en route to more copious hunting grounds and fishermen hauling their catch, still wriggling, aboard.

My foreign travel companions marvel at these sights and smells while they work their digital triggers over and over, celebrating their luck at length with claims of print-worthy images.

Beer flows freely when there's not much to do and nowhere to go but the direction the river wants to take you; fast friends are made between Australians, Americans, Dutch, Canadians and other Western visitors, though more exhilarating are the non-verbal connections created between us visitors and the local folks, thin strands of ethe-

real twine linking us in this time and space. A young Lao boy comes aboard and takes a seat among a group of strange faces; unaffected, he smiles and offers us fermented fish cakes of an origin unknown.

The Austrian doctor next to me, ignoring everything he ever learned in medical school and every Surgeon General's warning he ever memorized, takes a bite and swallows hard, tears welling in his eyes. Walls of cultural disassociation crumble in the wake of laughter and mirth. Two days in this boat, on this river, flow by all too swiftly.



What we Forget in the Fog

Luang Prabang is unlike anywhere else you've ever been in Asia, and not because they do something different with the banana pancakes. Charm radiates from the core of the city; this is the spiritual heart of a spiritual country and existence revolves around the meditative life. Tangerine-clad monks, many of them young men, gather for alms giving in the early hours of the morning, walking the warrens of the Old Town while Morning Prayer reverberates through the air.

Wat Sen is the most well known of all the places of worship and makes every visitor's travel photography

checklist, but along every crumbling path and down each uncharted alley the curious inspector may uncover a lesser-known wat, a peaceful place that encourages introspection.

My first morning in town and I'm up before the sun, walking through a thick fog along the Nam Khan promenade. A young monk with an umbrella over his shoulder walks a few steps ahead of me; his is a classic silhouette, one framed by the hanging vines and blooming flowers of the overgrown tees. Hearing the footfall behind him, he turns and smiles, asking me where I'm from. We exchange

pleasantries as you do when you're on the road, only I'm not sat in the dining room of a crowded guesthouse and I'm certainly not eating banana pancakes. He tells me about his favorite movies and how he'd like to visit the West someday.

He asks me what I think about his country and where I'll go to next. Typical, these questions that we've all been asked when traveling and met by curious locals, yet the exchange is no less enjoyable. We discuss the antiquity of Luang Prabang and some of her better-known temples, though he admits his history isn't what it

should be. I ask him to make up a story for me since I couldn't possibly know the difference. We walk together for ten or fifteen minutes; not long enough to learn much about one another, but perhaps long enough to become friends. Where our roads diverge the young monk shakes my hand and looks into my eyes. "Never trust an elephant you cannot hear," he says, laughing as he escapes into the enveloping fog.

Like many of the other curious travelers that arrive at Luang Prabang, I can't help but marvel at my good fortune. I've checked into a suite at the brilliantly appointed Hotel Villa Deux Rivières and take a midday beer on the spacious loggia, the best place in town to listen to the water roll by. It doesn't take long for days to haze together in this town, as if the wizard of good fortune is sat on a golden throne melting magical can-

dles at both ends. I watch mod-Lao cuisine come to life at Tamarind, where a chili-infused watermelon cocktail compliments the eclectic sampling platter of bamboo dips, chili pastes, stuffed lemongrass and eggplant curry.

I browse for handmade local textiles at Ock Pop Tok, hunt for bargains at the nightly cavalcade of vendors at the Handicraft Night Market and pick out prints depicting river life from the shops that line the alleys running perpendicular to the Mekong River. Many of the shops in Luang Prabang donate financial and

educational support to local sustainability programs and buying locally at the Night Market helps put money directly into the hands of the working class; even when I don't feel like shopping I don't mind dropping a few dimes to help benefit a good cause.

If you had an itinerary designed for Luang Prabang there's a good chance you'll eschew it in favor of long walks along one of the two great rivers, warm nights with good wine and short, strenuous hikes to Wat Chom Si for brilliant sunset views of the river-framed terrain. On one of my early walks through town I pass

Vat Xieng Toung monastery, a place that at times feels like the most venerated of all Buddhist monuments in the country.

Yet early in the morning the scene is eerily quiet, the absence of activity curious. As I'm about to leave I swear I see an elephant sneak around a corner, though by the time I get close the great beast is already gone, an apparition swept up in the mist.

Why We Love Waterfalls

The touts hanging around town want to sell you two things; boat rides and trips to the waterfalls. In the right frame of mind and in the right mood after a night at the villa bar, I say yes to the latter offer, the former still too much to process after two days on the Mekong.

Off we roll through the bustling heart of Luang Prabang proper, past small villages, black market petrol vendors and the tangled green of the hills. I keep an eye out for elephants and have our driver stop to search the landscape on more than one occasion. We finally arrive at a muddy plain where boatmen pack us into slender

canoes like so many ripening bananas for a thrilling cruise downstream. We hear the thunderous roar of the Tad Sea Waterfalls long before we see it and before long there's a cool mist in the air. Water rips down over the many tiers of the falls and into a massive emerald pool, deep enough for swimming and one of the best reasons to escape from Luang Prabang for the day.

Lying on my back, watching the clouds race overhead, I can't imagine a more perfect moment on the road when suddenly the peace is shattered by a cacophony of trumpets, as if an ancient Burmese army has burst

through the jungle ready to conquer the falls. By the time I catch my breath and wipe the mist from my eyes I'm face-to-face with the real source of sound; crashing into the pool is an old grey elephant, his mahout mounted regally upon his broad shoulders. I reach out to the beast, hesitant at first, and lay my hand on his trunk.

Unskilled as I am as an elephant handler, I feel as though there is an understanding between us, until the beast decides to deliver a sizable blast of water to my face, his rider and the crowd of onlookers laughing.

Get Lost All Over Again

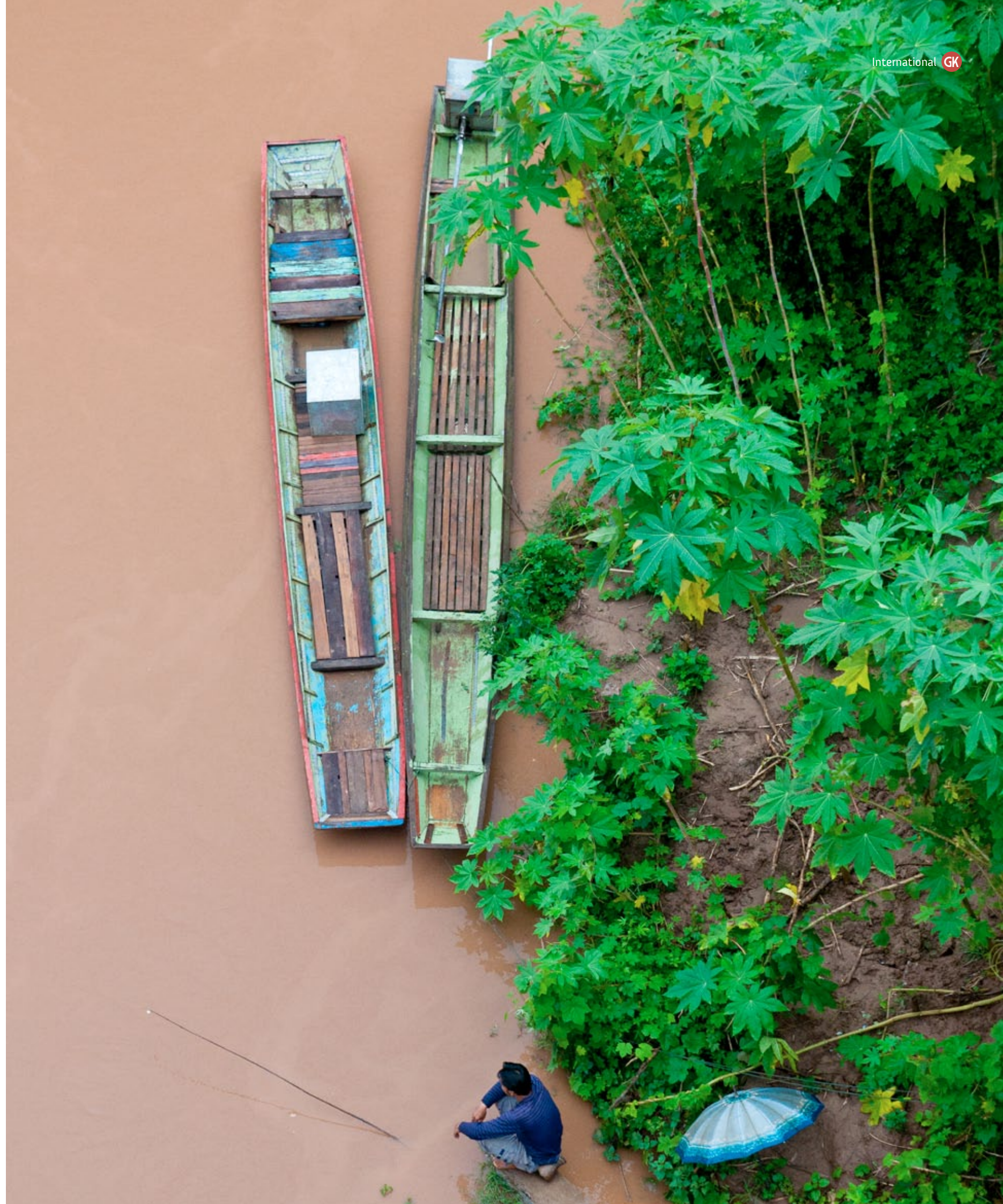
We travel to create new experiences. Though it is not known as a land of superlatives – there is no highest mountain here, no longest river there, no countless park of pagodas anywhere – Laos offers us opportunities to experience something different every day, whether we're looking for excitement on the river, adventures in the jungle or relief from the urgency of humanity in the most elegant of Asian

cities. The slow boat from Huay Xai to Luang Prabang is indeed a pilgrimage of a certain kind, while Luang Prabang itself is the sort of place where you can unwind until your visa runs dry. A trip to the sleepy village of Nong Khiaw, tucked away in the shadows of great karst giants, is the perfect place to let time slip away. The Plain of Jars, in the north eastern corner of the country, will keep you wondering about the

meaning of history while the bewitching capital of Vientiane affords visitors the chance to get in touch with their inner self at meditation centers or to cut loose at the Laos Beer factory, the purveyor of the ubiquitous national brew. Find Laos, lose yourself in fine dining, gracious hospitality and awe-inspiring scenery then ask yourself if you ever want to be found again.



"A young Lao boy comes aboard and takes a seat among a group of strange faces; unaffected, he smiles and offers us fermented fish cakes of an origin unknown."



Seoul's offbeat museums

By STEPHANIE POTELL

"You know you just earned street cred when your Korean coworkers ask, 'There's a Tax Museum in Seoul?'"

In addition to the royal palaces, Jongno-gu has almost half of all the museums in Seoul. As if you needed any more reason to explore, here are five offbeat sights guaranteed to give you something to talk about on Monday morning.



1 • Lock Museum

Inside a monolithic rusted metal building is one of the coolest museums in Seoul. While the lighting is dim and dare I say sexy, the antique locks are illuminated within sleek suspended glass cases. The largest displays are devoted to traditional Korean locks such as "navel" locks from the

Kyongsang Province and "tiguet" shaped locks from the Jeolla Province. Animals also played an important symbolical role. "Fish" locks were auspicious as they sleep with open eyes and are therefore thought to be good guards. After browsing the collection, relax with a warm drink in the cozy café downstairs.

www.lockmuseum.org
Admission: 3,000
Open: 10:00-6:00
Closed: Mondays & holidays

2 • Seoul Museum of Chicken Art

The first level is a bit like a jumbled country kitchen. In the middle of the room, surrounded by chickens, is a ladder with an ark on top that only makes sense after the guide's explanation. However, upstairs is an intriguing exhibit of traditional wooden chicken figurines called "kokdu." These chickens deco-

rated funeral biers and served two functions: their morning call chased away ghosts and being the only zodiac animal with wings (dragons don't count!), they guided the deceased. Be sure to get a guide- they make the experience much more enjoyable!

www.kokodac.com
Admission: 3,000
Open: 10:00-6:00
Closed: Mondays and holidays

3 • Owl Museum

If you have ever returned home from a thrift store with a crocheted owl tapestry victoriously held over your head, then you will appreciate this small establishment. While only a museum in name, the cabinets that line the walls are stuffed to full capacity with all sorts of trinkets. Peruse through the collection

before warming yourself with a hot cup of green tea (included in the price of admission). Photos aren't allowed inside, but you can use the museum's two souvenir rubber stamps for free.

www.owlmuseum.co.kr
Admission: 5,000
Open: 10:00-7:00
Closed: Mondays & holidays

Kokdu



4 • Tax Museum

While most tax-paying citizens might wish to avoid the National Tax Service Annex, it would be a shame to follow suite. Inside is a small yet interesting display of early tax collection methods. There are other random items like Joseon-era ID tassels and horse "tokens" which, like credit cards, came with differ-

ent limits and were used to borrow for official business. You know you just earned street cred when your Korean coworkers ask, "There's a Tax Museum in Seoul?"

www.nts.go.kr/museum
Admission: Free
Open: Monday-Friday 9:00-6:00
Saturday: 9:00-3:00
Closed: Sundays & holidays

5 • Seoul Education Museum

Educational institutions have been in operation in Korea since the year 372! Given the importance of education, I think it would be safe to say that it is essential to visit this museum. From the warm wooden glow of 19th Century scholar's furniture to a vintage children's snack shop replica, the museum has

an appealing range of artifacts. You can also model school uniforms in the interactive room and sit behind the desk of an old wooden school house. Be sure to pick up the English brochure at the information desk.

www.edumuseum.seoul.kr
Admission: Free
Open: 9:00-6:00
Monday-Friday 9:00-5:00
Saturday-Sunday
Closed: Holidays & the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month.

Considering Korea's educational zeal, this one is a must visit



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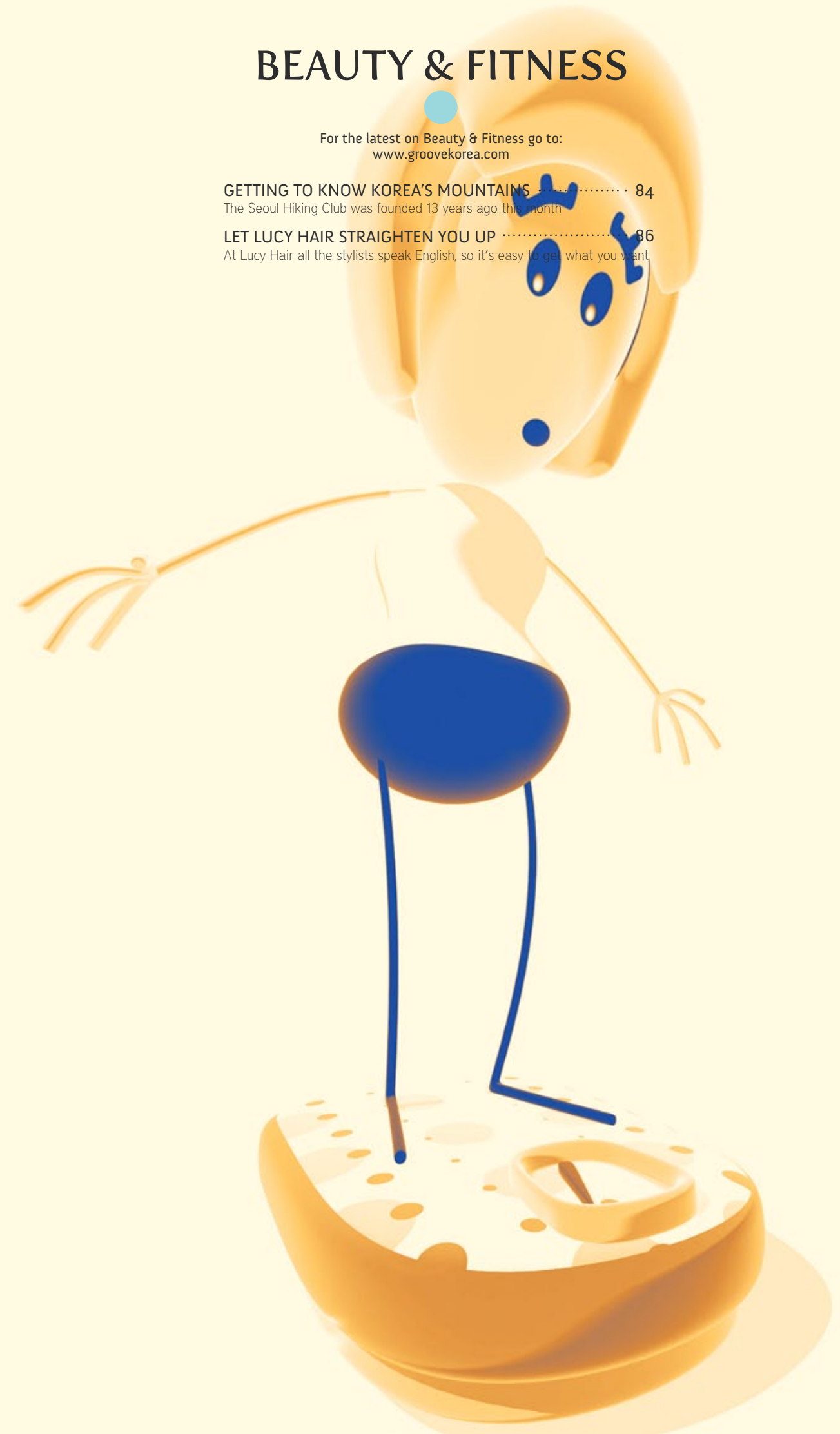
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The Seoul Hiking Club was founded 13 years ago this month

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Getting to know Korea's mountains

| By GEORGE KIM

"I became more international and geneous through the friendships I've made over the past 13 years with expats and tourists. I still contact friends from around 20 countries on Faceook every day."

• Thirteen years ago this month, Kim Chang-dae started the Seoul Hiking Club with one intention: to share the beauty of mountains around Korea with foreigners. What surprised Kim was the lifelong friendships he has made with people from around the world.

One of the most important friendships of his life was made through the club. Kim counts Danish-Korean Christian Rhee as one of his closest friends. The two often have dinner and Kim helped Rhee start his own business in Seoul.

"Through the hiking club, I have met different people from over 20 countries," Kim said. "While climbing, we have more than four hours to talk and get to know each other. And after the hike, dinner and drinking makes us closer."

The 45-year-old Kim was born in Gyangsang Province, runs his own small theater and is a producer of plays and musicals.

What makes mountains in Korea special is their accessibility. In Seoul, it's possible to take the subway to any number of mountains for a good day hike. Enhanc-

ing the ambiance are Buddhist temples scattered throughout the country.

Kim's favorite is Bukhansan, but he said Soraksan in Gangwon Province is at the top of most tourists' and expats' list.

The Seoul Hiking Club is made up of about two-thirds expats and the remainder are Korean. The climbs last from three to five hours and are usually capped off with dinner (and sometimes a party).

All that's needed is a pair of good hiking boots and a positive frame of mind. Kim suggests picking up any equipment you need from the market near Dongdaemun. Prices for decent footwear range from 60,000 won to 200,000 won.

"Hiking regularly leads to a healthier body and soul. The long hikes help us get closer because we have no choice but to focus on our hiking partners."

"I became more international and generous through the friendships I've made over the past 13 years with expats and tourists. I still contact friends from around 20 countries on Faceook every day."

GK

contact INFO

The club has meet almost every Saturday since forming on Jan. 3, 1998.
Call Neil at: 010-9720-4120 Or E-mail: neilog@shaw.ca.

For more information go to:
www.hikingkorea.com.

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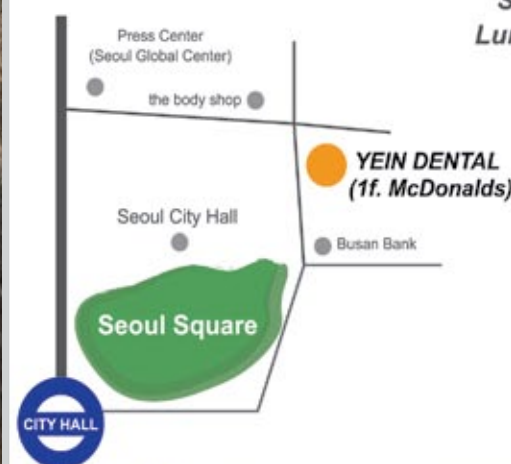
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Let Lucy Hair straighten you up

| By GEORGE KIM

"We have many customers who come here to have their hair styles fixed after having another salons mess it up." --

(Lucy) Kim Kyong-A

• We've all been there: You go to a salon and no one speaks English, so you choose your style out of a book that serves as a hair style menu. The problem is that the book is 20 years old (sometimes older). Some are from Japan. Needless to say – it's a roll of the dice. If you don't walk out with a New Kids on the Block-style mullet, consider it a victory.

That's not how it works at Lucy Hair. There, all the stylists speak English, so it is very easy for them to understand what expat customers really want. In fact, they have all honed their craft in either London or Australia.

Kim Kyong-A from Lucy Hair says the return customer ratio is as high as it is because of the attention her staff pays to customers' individual needs.

Kim, better known as Lucy, has been in the business for 16 years and the last decade has been mostly focused servicing the needs of Seoul's growing expat community. Though Lucy Hair has only been opened for eight months now, Kim has worked at other hair salons throughout Seoul.

Kim is the owner of the salon, the chief stylist and the supervisor of all the staff.

"I am really excited when I have the chances to help the clients try something new," said Kim. "I love being able to answer my clients questions and explore new hair styles for them. I get a lot of joy when I see the client so happy with their new hair style."

She prioritizes service and

quality care. And customers, for their part, say they are very satisfied with the service they receive. The model concentrates on offering high quality hair treatment at a reasonable price.

"We believe it is important that we adopt to the needs of our diverse clientele, as we serve a great deal of both Koreans and expats," Kim said.

"We build relationships with clients by making sure to remember their faces, names, and previous visits. Ninety percent of our clients return after their first visit. The other 10 percent must have left Korea," she said jokingly.

Popular services include coloring and "waves." Coloring ranges from 85,000 won to 100,000 won and waves from 100,000 won. They also specialize in hair extensions, Japanese style perms, and treatments.

Kim studied and worked in London for six years. "I am proud to boast that I am the most experienced with blonde highlights," she said.

About 80 percent of Lucy Hair's customers are expats.

"I had an expat client who was very happy with our service that she began crying afterwards and asked me, 'how did you do this?' My reply was 'It's my bread and butter.' We have many customers who come here to have their hair styles fixed after having another salons mess it up."

What's Kim most proud of? "It is the accumulation of all the knowledge I have gained over the past 16 years in the field," she said.

GK

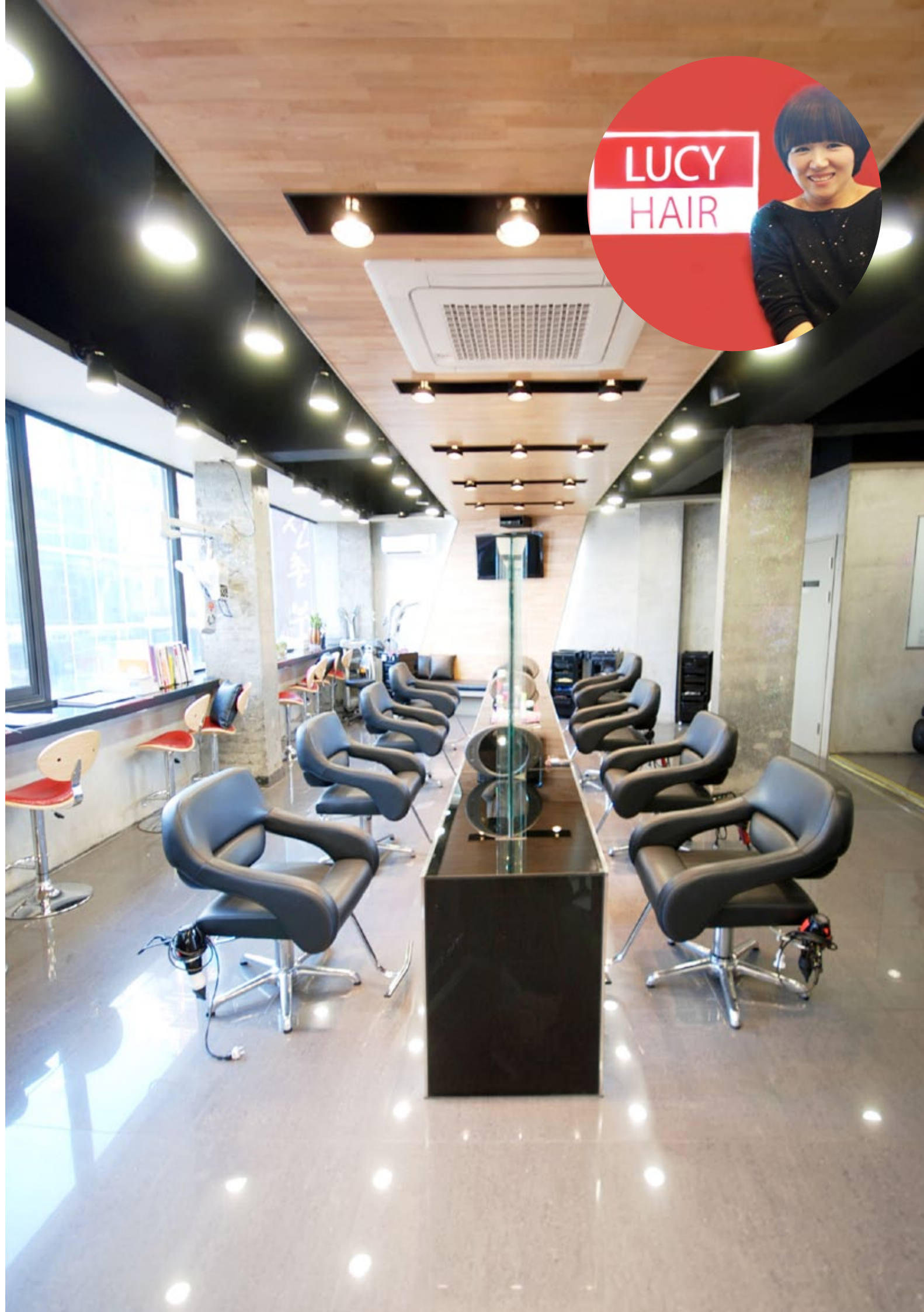
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Lucy Hair is located in Chandcheon-dong, Seodaemun-gu, Seoul.

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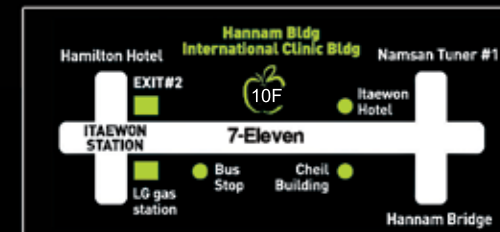


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PICTURE OF THE MONTH

GK

Submit yours to the Seoul Photo Club on flickr



1st
Place

Title:
Flowers Withered in Winter
Photographer: Tobias Breer

These flowers were found neglected in a back alley near my work. As with many old things, they were pushed to the side, all beauty lost to the world. Despite that, there is such beauty in age. I beseech you to look again at the old, and see it with fresh eyes. Taken with a Hasselblad 500C : 80mm f/2.8 : Kodak T-Max 400 : Hand Developing



2nd
Place

Title:
No Such Thing As “Too Old”
Photographer: Zack Cluley

We now exist in a world of complexities, complication. As we grow older, more mature, we must never forget to enjoy the little things in life, such as a greased cooked corn dog covered in french fries.

GK

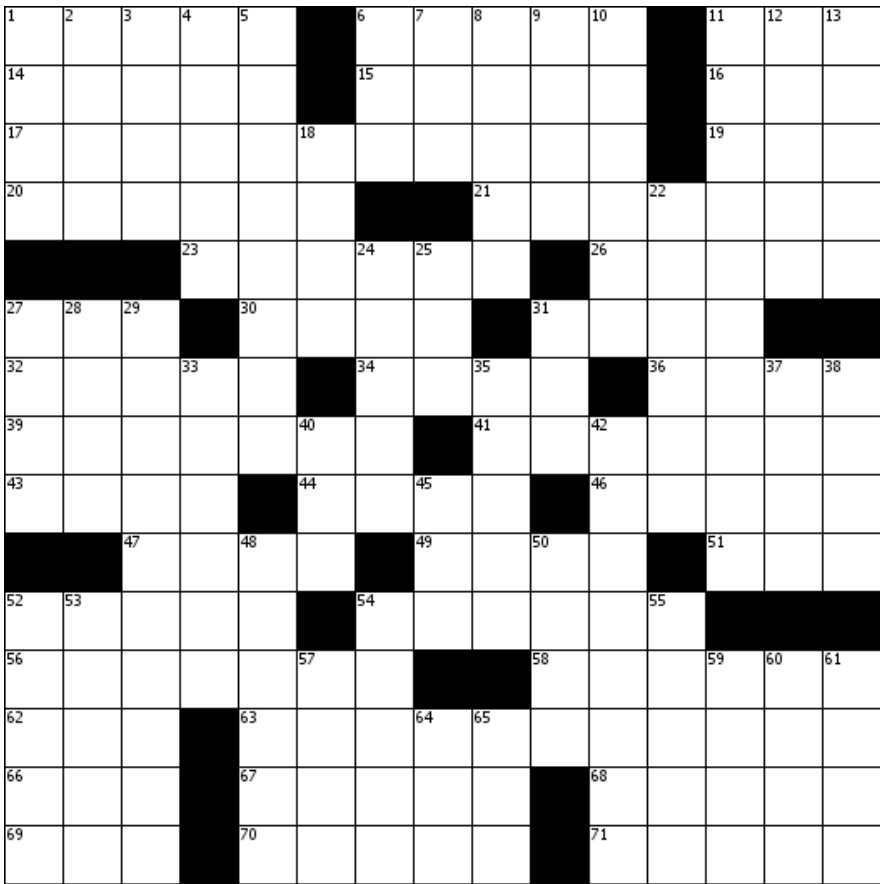
3rd
Place

Title:
Old
Photographer: Aaron Raisey

Being old is a function of age – or is it? In Korea, time as it affects buildings seems to be accelerated – the trappings of age seem to afflict structures quite rapidly, as reflected in these discarded timepieces. Lack of proper attention to the product at some point in it's fabrication and care leads it to being old and due for replacement well before it's time.

Go to Seoul Photo Contest online for the current challenge:
[flickr.com/groups/seoulphotoclub](https://www.flickr.com/groups/seoulphotoclub)

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. Windshield cleaner

6. Involuntary twitch

11. Dieter's concern

14. Make ____ of (record)

15. Nouveau ____

16. Bachelor's last words

17. Hash house, maybe

19. Meteorological phenomenon

20. Believer in Judaism

21. 1970 Beatles hit

23. Chartered

26. Yellow pigment

27. Sen. Kennedy
32. Lugs

34. Workout woe

36. It may be furrowed

39. Certain analyst

41. Bedroom furniture, perhaps

43. Hardly prohibitionists

44. Pencil leftover

46. Get straight A's, e.g.

47. Sound from the kennel

49. Uprising at Folsom

51. Trendy

52. Native Israeli

54. Lure into crime
56. Do this twice before cutting

58. Precipitates, in a way

62. Rangle

63. Licentious codger

66. It can lead to sudden death

67. Beethoven's "Fur ____"

68. Metric poetic feet

69. Possessive pronoun

70. Is offensive, in a way

71. Necklace securer

DOWN

1. Quipsters

2. Apropos of

3. Whitman output

4. Online marketing

5. Quit worrying

6. Many AARP members

7. Dickens protagonist

8. "It'll be ____ day in Hades . . ."

9. It's about a foot

10. Personal counselor

11. Loaded

12. Clay-brick building

13. Minaret, for one

18. Revolutionary period?

22. Fridge forerunner

24. Microwave button

25. PC key

27. Spring event

28. Life of Riley

29. 2005 Chicago Cubs manager

31. Word with hour or cent

33. Hologram producers

35. Sister's attire

37. Round treat

38. Lash mark

40. Uncommon sense

42. Like some elements

45. Ornamental container

48. Skincare name

50. Roughly

52. Common surname

53. Eagle's home

54. Like some Poe tales

55. Use a stationary bike

57. Really annoy

59. Woodhouse of literature

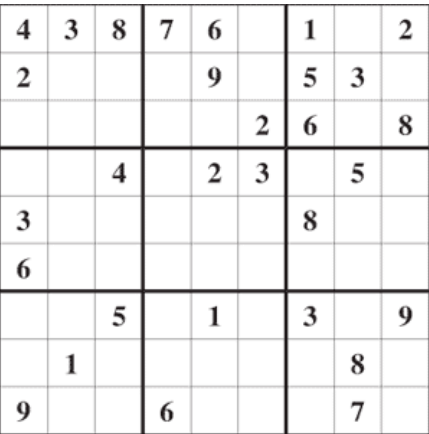
60. Barkeep's records

61. Cutting sound

64. "For shame!"

65. Agreeable reply

SUDOKU



HOW TO PLAY?

Sudoku requires no calculation or arithmetic skills. It is essentially a game of placing numbers in squares, using very simple rules of logic and deduction. It can be played by children and adults and the rules are simple to learn.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the game is to fill all the blank squares in a game with the correct numbers. There are three very simple constraints to follow. In a 9 by 9 square Sudoku game:

- Every row of 9 numbers must include all digits 1 through 9 in any order
- Every column of 9 numbers must include all digits 1 through 9 in any order
- Every 3 by 3 subsection of the 9 by 9 square must include all digits 1 through 9

Banking Questions: Michelle Answers

Banking Questions: Michelle Answers is a monthly column written by Michelle Farnsworth. Michelle is an eight-year resident of Korea who is the Foreign Client Relationship Manager at the Shinhan Bank Seoul Global Center - the only bank branch in Korea that is exclusively dedicated to serving foreigners and foreign companies. Visit "Shinhan Bank Seoul Global Center" on Facebook for more information. Note that the banking information provided in this column is based on Shinhan Bank policies and may not be applicable to all banks in Korea.

What's the deal with checks in Korea?

Banking advice for foreigners in Korea.

Submit your banking questions to: farnsworth@shinhan.com



- Even though we do not use personal checks or have checkbooks like we might back home, checks do exist in Korea. There are several types of checks available, in fact.

Bankers Check (Supyo).
The most common type of check in Korea is the banker's check or supyo. Since the largest currency note is only 50,000 won in Korea, supyo are often used because they are available in larger denominations. Usually supyo are printed in 100,000, 500,000, and 1 million won denominations and can be issued by a bank teller or directly from an ATM. But if you would like a supyo made out for a specific amount, you must visit a bank branch in person.
Supyo can be used just like cash, although you may be asked to write your Alien Registration number number, phone number, and signature on the back. While a supyo can be cashed at any bank in Korea, if you cash it (or deposit it) at the bank that it was issued from, you can avoid any fees or delays. Please note that supyo are only used in Korea and cannot be cashed overseas.

Traveler's checks.
These are convenient and safe checks that can be used when traveling. They are available at any bank that has been approved to conduct foreign exchange transactions by the Korean government and never expire. (Savings banks are not permitted to conduct FX transactions)

Check cards.
Rather than a checkbook, you are given a check (debit) card when you open a checking account in Korea. A check card may either be domestic or international; be sure to ask your teller about yours before traveling. Also, most check cards offer various discounts, benefits, points and rewards. Ask your teller about the unique features of your particular card. Many offer substantial discounts at restaurants, movie theaters.

Foreign currency checks issued overseas.
It is usually possible to cash a check from overseas at a bank in Korea. It can depend on the type of check, the currency of the check, the check's expiration date and the amount of the check (while different currencies have different minimum amounts, checks of equal to or more than \$20,000 have additional requirements).
Be warned though that the whole process of cashing your check will take about a month. The check is first deposited at your bank in Korea and then must be physically mailed to the overseas issuing bank, where it will be processed. Finally, the issuing bank will wire the money back to Korea.
The fees to cash an overseas check end up being almost the same as the fees for making an overseas remittance (wire transfer).

Michelle Farnsworth

MICHELLE FARNSWORTH
Foreign Client Relationship Manager

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BACK PAIN?

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- Mid back pain
- Hip pain
- Knee pain
- Ankle pain
- Foot pain
- Foot disorders
- Jaw pain
- Numbness
- Scoliosis
- Sport injuries
- Neck pain
- Headache
- Lumbar disk
- Leg pain
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- Shoulder pain
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- Wrist pain
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- Whiplash
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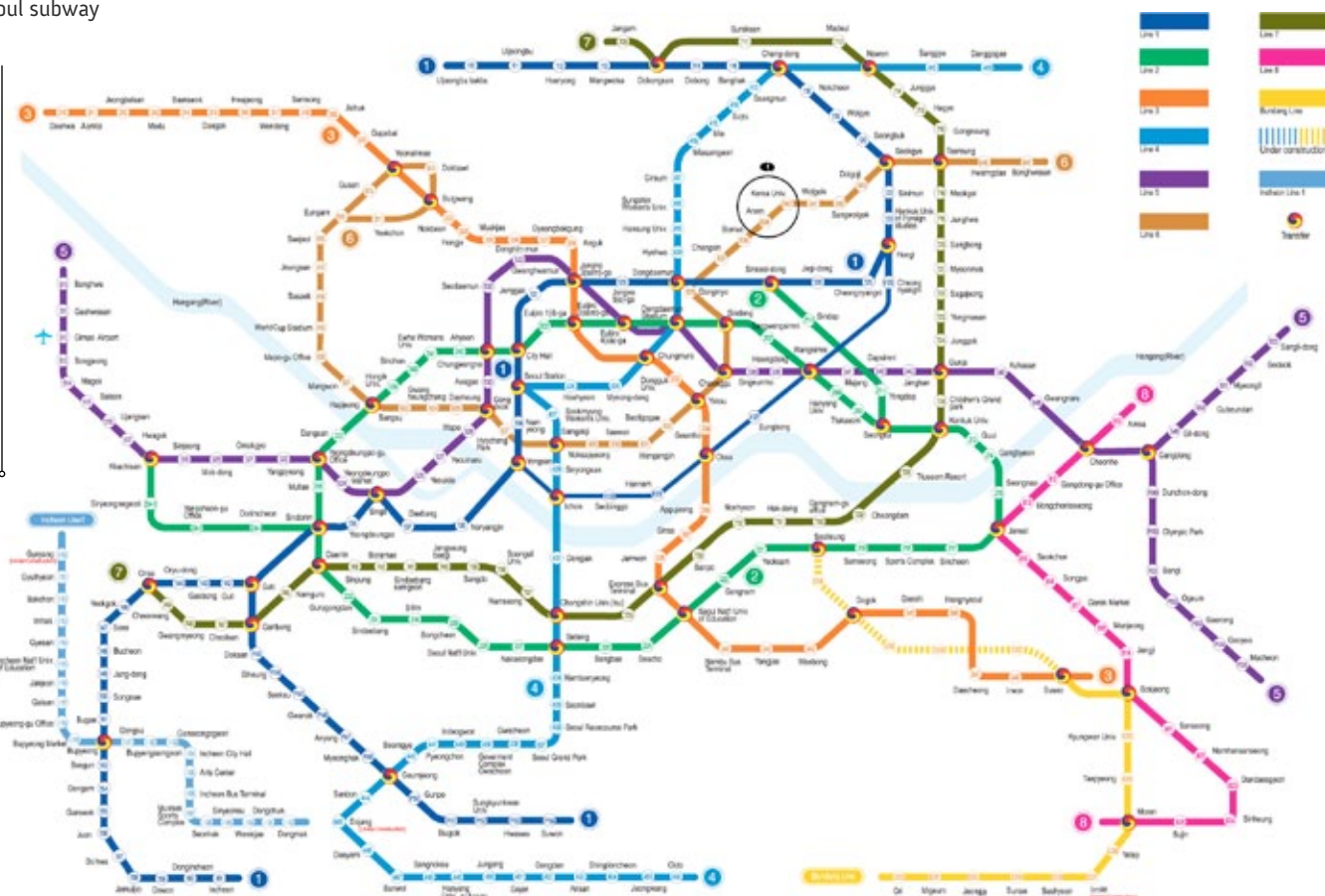
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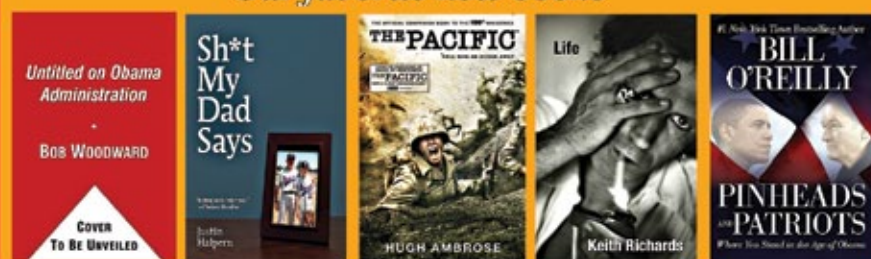
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GK Horoscope



Aries

Today you might put aside your usual tendency to push ahead without a backward glance. You could reconsider past ideas and see them in an entirely new light. Circumstances may force reevaluation of your current job or lifestyle. Or you could contemplate a move. Contact with a sibling or neighbor may be restored. Today is all about adjustment.



Taurus

Today is about reevaluation. Dreams or ambitions that you may have abandoned could resurface. You could be forced to confront difficulties in your current situation. You might decide to call in a few favors from people you haven't heard from in ages. Old debts may need repaying. This is a great time to tie up loose ends, attain closure, and move on.



Gemini

Happy and painful memories of childhood could come to mind today, bringing new understanding of how your early experiences affect your present situation. Unexpected insights could bring a new perspective on the present and future. You could realize that a personal or professional course isn't right for you. Don't let fear overwhelm your need for transition.



Cancer

While you may be comfortable with your environment, you could receive an unmistakable signal that it's time for change. This could involve a different job, allowing you to make use of skills and talents that have been lying fallow. Don't let small but necessary tasks make you abandon a new course of action. It represents a vital stage in your personal growth.



Leo

Sudden financial success could produce upheaval in your lifestyle. Therefore, rethink your current situation and consider the pursuit of cherished old dreams that you may have abandoned. Old friends could be left behind and new friendships begun. It's important to remember that once you embark on this new path, there'll be no turning back.



Virgo

You spend much of your life serving others. Now you may reevaluate your "duty" toward them. Perhaps someone is taking unfair advantage of your good nature. Perhaps you're finally experiencing desires that you feel you have to fulfill. Look objectively at your situation without feeling guilt, sorrow, or the fear of losing a friend. Your happiness matters, too!



Libra

You always see both sides of a situation clearly. Today you might judge possible future courses of action in view of the past. Prior values may be put to the test and former opinions revised. You could consider ending a relationship or entering a new one. This may take effort, but it will set the stage for future success.



Scorpio

Someone you've known for a long time may disappear from your life. This could leave you feeling disoriented and unfocused. Your ideas of truth, honor, ethics, and morality might require some revision in light of recent events. A change of profession might be looming on the horizon. On the positive side, you're in the process of transcending your limitations.



Sagittarius

Though communication is one of your strong points, today you might find it hard. You may feel introspective, but open, honest discussion could be what you need now. Your long-held ideas and values are changing, and you might require guidance to put your new beliefs to work. A search for truth is in your future, and you'll want some companions along the way.



Capricorn

Stress-related health complaints could force reevaluation of your current situation, particularly your job. You may take a good look at your skills and consider how they can be put to use in other fields. Communication from distant places may bring new opportunities to pursue old ambitions. Change is in the wind. It isn't wise to try to stop it.



Aquarius

Your inner child surfaces today. Memories of past good times bring out your playful side. You might want to try forms of amusement that you once enjoyed but have long since abandoned. Children provide inspiration and outlet for this energy. Tell them stories about your own childhood or read to them. Indulge your flights of fancy. You can always face reality tomorrow.



Pisces

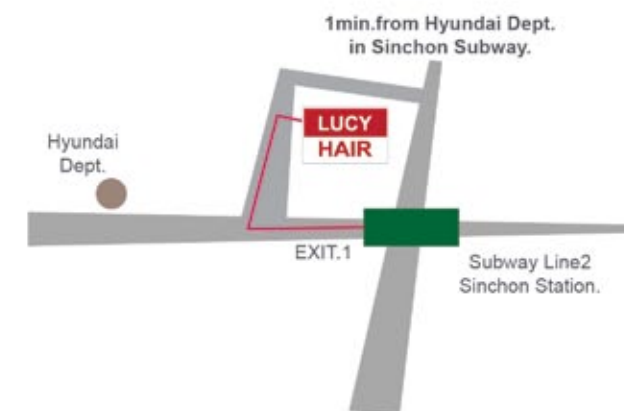
Renegotiating relationships may cause sorrow today. You may find that trying to fix one won't work. Past emotions that have created difficulties may resurface. Releasing them could bring the courage to move on. Bonds with others are like matter and energy. They can be changed, but they can't be created or destroyed. Whatever form it takes, a true bond will always be there.



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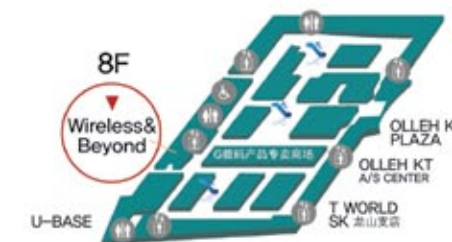
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